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Mixed opinions

Mental health wards row

John O'Donoghue

Author of *Sectioned*: 'I'm a survivor'

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April 2009

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editorial

Fuzzy image

What is it with disabled people and the media? Over the past few weeks we've seen a national outpouring of pity – perhaps an unsurprising reaction to the death of a public figure's son, though here the pity was as much for the dead disabled boy as the grieving parents – an outbreak of protectiveness towards a maligned disabled TV presenter, and that core of middle England, the Radio 4 audience voting Peter White, if not the funniest man in the nation, at least the Station's top comedy dog. And all of this follows on the heels of Mikey Hughes's Big Brother near victory and Verne Troyer's similarly close shave with triumph on the Celeb version of the show.

All of which leaves those of us who're involved in presenting disability in the media, and critiquing how others do it, grappling with something that's between extreme puzzlement and deep frustration.

This is because, co-existent with these signs of spring, Jeremy Clarkson still gets away with defining Britain's Prime Minister in terms of an impairment – had he referred to Barak

Obama in terms similarly derogatory of his ethnicity Clarkson might well have received the same sort of bum's rush which Carol Thatcher was correctly given for a similar error of judgement – and it's still widely held to be

“The relationship between disabled people and the media remains deeply confused”

appropriate for comics to hold out the begging bowl to viewers in the name of “helping disabled people”, and the press continues to be filled with stories of pluck and triumph over tragedy when they're not moaning about “political correctness gone mad”.

In short, the relationship between disabled people and the media remains deeply confused. And of course, that's because the society which the media represents and reflects back to itself, hasn't sorted out its own attitudes towards us as individuals or as a community. And too often they're more comfortable with their own views on us than ours.

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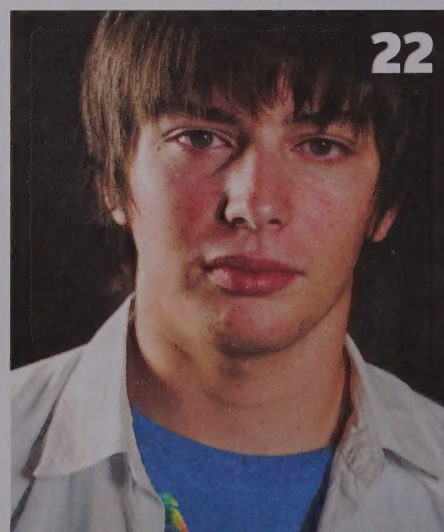


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Rieser's reservations on ratification

Sunil Peck

Richard Rieser, chair of the United Nations Convention Campaign Coalition, has welcomed the Government's recent move towards ratifying the UN Convention that promotes the human rights of disabled people.

He says that ratification will bring significant rights for disabled people, and applauds the Government's commitment to set up and fund a forum of organisations, to be led by disabled people, to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

He also welcomes the Government's commitment to promote equality by challenging negative portrayals of disabled people in the media and support equality training.

But Rieser challenges the Government's decision to opt out of four parts of the Convention: those relating to legal capacity, education, immigration and service in the armed forces.

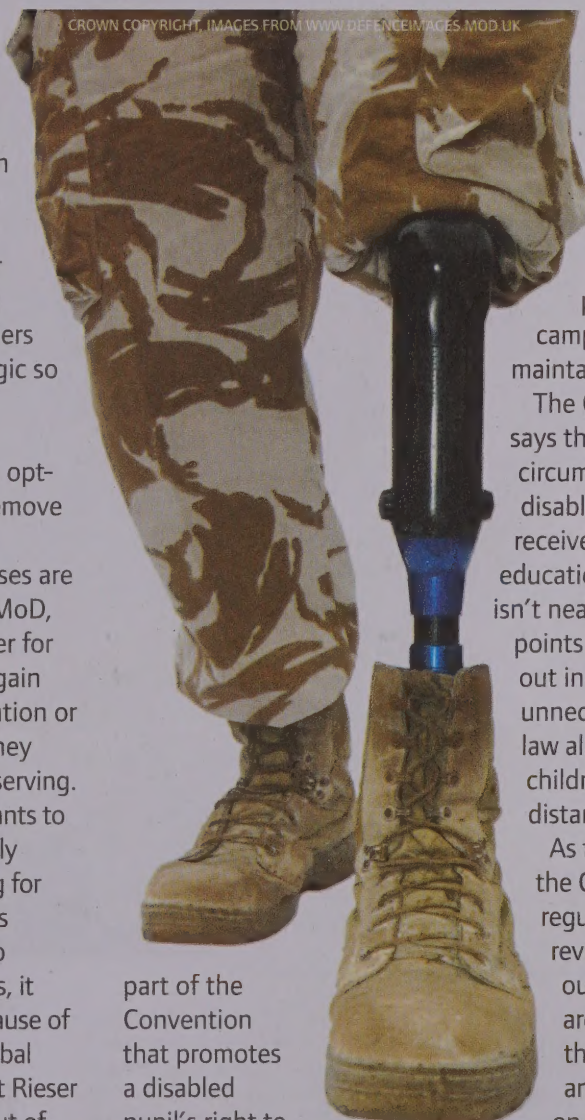
The Government wants to opt out of the commitment to recruit disabled people into the armed forces on the grounds, it says, that all personnel must be fit for frontline fighting. But Rieser says that the forces should be able to accommodate

people unfit to fight. He says an opt-out is illogical because the MoD already recruits personnel with autism and dyspraxia. It also accommodates injured personnel, for example by adjusting desk heights for soldiers who become paraplegic so they can work as storekeepers.

Rieser fears that an opt-out in this area will remove the protection of the Convention where cases are brought against the MoD, and will make it harder for disabled veterans to gain reasonable compensation or a decent pension if they sustain injuries while serving.

The Government wants to retain the right to apply wider health screening for immigration applicants entering, or seeking to remain in, the UK. This, it says, is necessary because of the possibility of a global health emergency. But Rieser fears that by opting out of this part of the Convention, the Government could refuse refugee status to asylum-seekers with cerebral palsy or Down's syndrome, on the grounds that they might be a drain on the NHS's resources.

The Government proposes to opt out of the



part of the Convention that promotes a disabled pupil's right to be educated in an inclusive education system. It sees special schools as integral to inclusive education but Rieser says that special schools actually promote segregation and should be phased out.

He says that rather than addressing the problems of

pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools, the Government is bowing to the Conservative party, which is campaigning to maintain special schools.

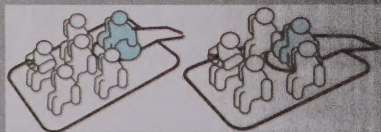
The Government also says that there are circumstances where a disabled pupil would receive a better education in a school that isn't near them, but Rieser points out that an opt-out in this area is unnecessary because the law already allows children to attend more distant schools.

As for legal capacity, the Convention calls for regular independent reviews to be carried out when decisions are made, or when a third person claims and collects benefits, on behalf of another person. But the

Department for Work and Pensions says that because no such review system is currently in place, the Government would be in breach of the Convention. Rieser says that rather than opting out, the Government should introduce such a system.

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Pedestrians see red at faster green lights

Sunil Peck

Disabled pedestrians say that proposals to cut crossing times at road junctions will make it more dangerous to cross the road for disabled people and others.

Mayor of London Boris Johnson (*pictured, right*) made a commitment to speed up traffic flow in his election manifesto. A Transport for London (TfL) spokesman said that TfL was working hard to meet that pledge.

But it's understood that proposals are now in hand to reduce crossing times by up to six seconds, making crossings more dangerous for disabled people and other groups such as older people and parents with buggies.

Mike Shamash, who lives in London and is a person of restricted growth, described the proposals as an attack on pedestrians which would hit disabled pedestrians particularly hard.

Mr Shamash said: "It takes me longer to cross a road than a lot of other people. I already find that when crossing certain roads, I have to rush."

Another London resident, Karl Farrell, who uses a white stick and is a member of the National Federation



of the Blind, said that he was in favour of making the flow of traffic more efficient but was concerned at the Mayor's proposals.

"I'm not a slow walker but I don't think there's any scope for reducing time. If I were to walk faster, there's the potential to veer off track and come up against a barrier."

It's thought that digital countdown displays could also be introduced at crossings under the proposals, which would show pedestrians the amount of time left for them to cross.

But Tom Pey, who's a guide dog user and director of external affairs at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, said that digital displays would be useless for visually impaired people.

Mr Pey added that Mr Johnson's plans were only designed to speed up traffic



KELLY MULLAN

and that there was evidence to suggest that accidents increase in situations where motorists feel they have priority over pedestrians.

TfL's spokesman said that pedestrians are always provided with a crossing time based on Government guidance for walking at a speed of 1.2 metres per second.

But he said that some crossings allowed for considerably more time to cross.

He said that 150 crossings had been looked at so far and that six seconds had been removed from one junction, but the amount of time available to cross still fell within Government guidelines.

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Private firms fall short on jobs



Cathy Reay

Leaked papers have revealed that private employment agencies are failing to place 94 per cent of the incapacity benefit claimants on their books, and thereby doing too little to help disabled people to find work.

The documents, sent by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officials to Jobcentre Plus staff, confirmed that between April and October 2008, private firms found jobs for just six per cent of the unemployed people on their books, rather than the 26 per cent they

claimed would be possible.

In contrast, state-run job centres have found employment for 14 per cent of their clients.

MPs accused employment minister Tony McNulty of withholding this information when, at the beginning of the year, he said that figures on private firms would not appear until the summer. Labour MP Lynne Jones said the information was crucial to MPs as they decided on the welfare reform bill.

Gareth Davis, president of the National League of Blind and Disabled people,

told *Disability Now* that in the current economic downturn, discrimination in employment is at its peak.

Said Davis: "If someone without a disability is classed as vulnerable, what about those people who are perceived as disadvantaged? Whether it's state or private jobseeker firms, they need to look at areas disabled people can work in and the Government needs to help by making those more available."

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, said: "We're concerned

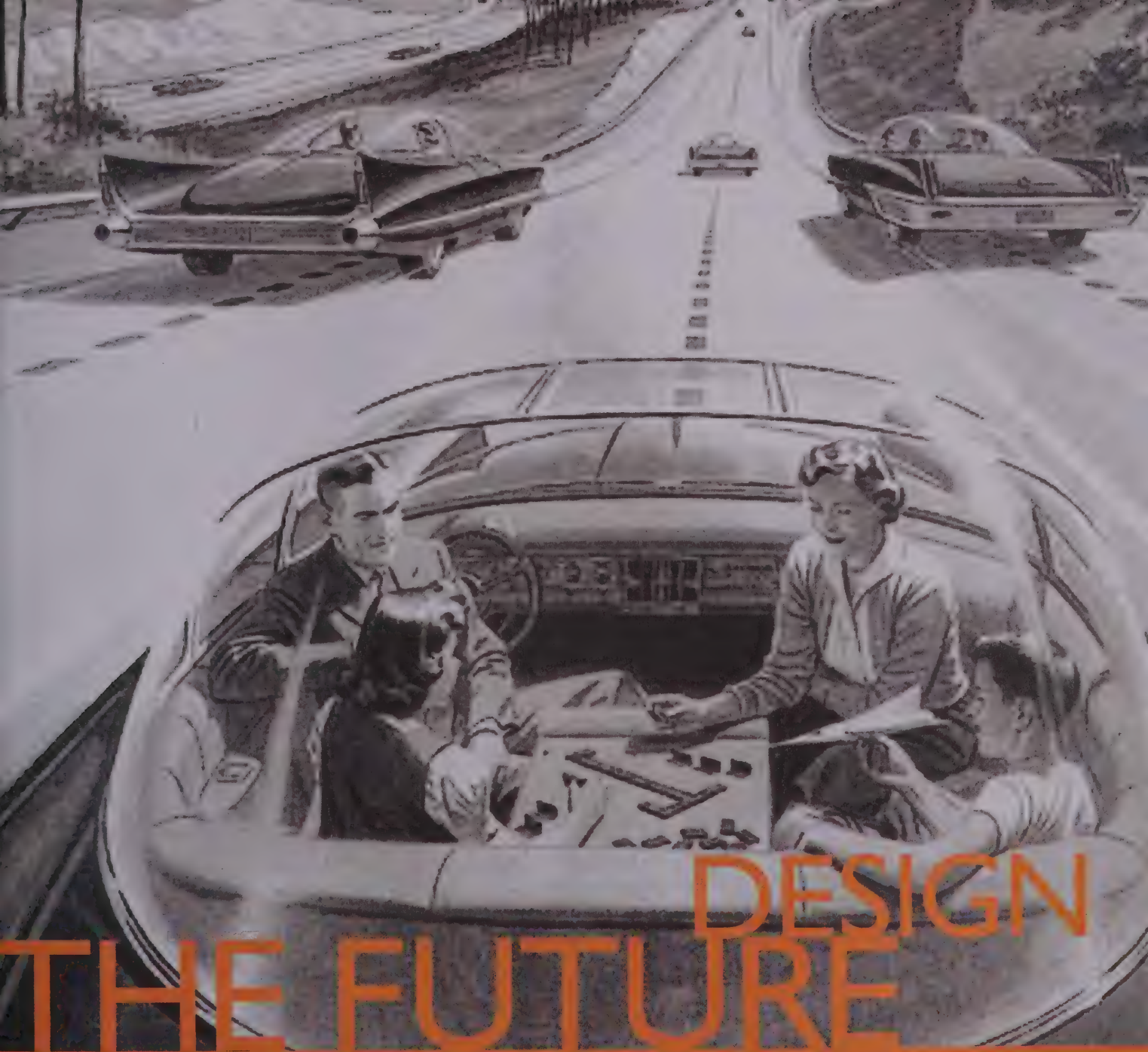
about the welfare bill going through parliament as it emphasises private firms' popularity. But these leaked reports show that the private sector doesn't have all the answers that the Government has been lobbying for."

Steve Cairns, director of employment services at the charity Scope, agreed, adding: "Our concern is that private companies, under pressure from government contracts, might concentrate on those it's easier to place into work."

A spokesman for Leonard Cheshire Disability said: "There may be expertise in the private sector that could be utilised but the key must be to make sure that we get the right system for disabled people, however the support is provided."

A DWP spokeswoman said the new welfare reform bill will help disabled people seeking work. "Early findings show that people with health conditions or disabilities require more support looking for jobs, underlining the need to provide them with an extra push to move them closer to work."

"This is exactly why our welfare reform bill sets out new powers: so that we can ensure people are required to engage with our work programmes and actively look for, or progress towards, work."



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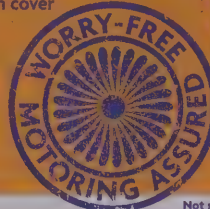
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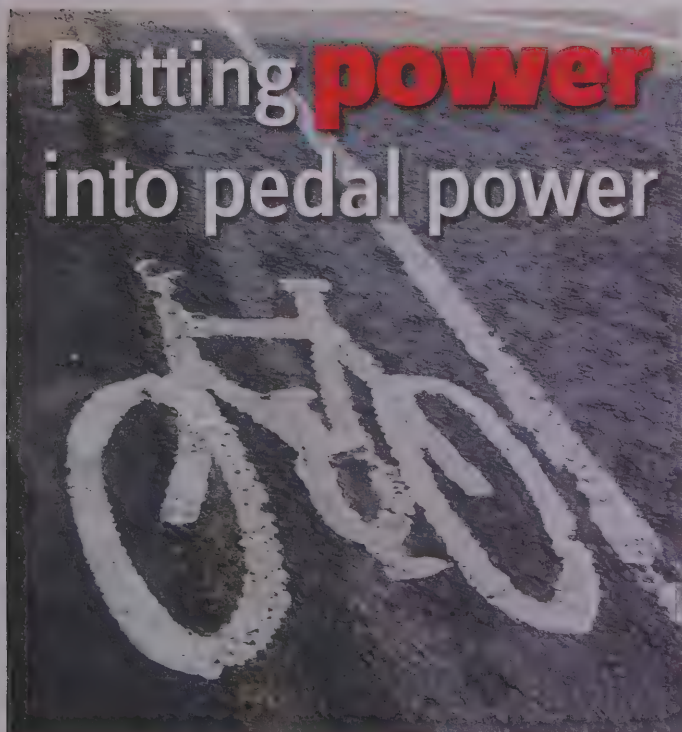
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campaigns



London Cycling Campaign (LCC), with support from Transport for London and the Big Lottery Fund, have just produced an *All Ability Cycling Guide for Greater London*, with an

accompanying DVD, *Go Cycling*. **Alan Sutherland** explains why they're somewhat off track

The LCC, which represents the interests of cyclists in London, is a major campaigning organisation, of which I am proud to be a member. But when it comes to disability, they don't quite get it.

There are a large number of charitable projects, in London and nationally, that provide cycle riding as a leisure activity for 'special needs' groups. Typically

based in a local park, they provide specialist equipment for fun rides. Being run by cycling activists, they have a strong voice in cycling organisations, and are clearly the dominant voice in the *All Ability Guide*. I do not know a single one that is run by disabled people.

What is lacking in all this is any concept of independent living, any sense that some of us ride cycles for transport rather

than once-a-week leisure – and that a lot more disabled people would do so if they had the right sort of advice.

I would like to see, not an *All Ability Cycling Guide*, but a *Disability Cycling Guide* that treated disabled people as existing in the real world and riding on roads rather than in parks. I would like some discussion of the practicalities of commuting. (The *Guide* does not actually recognise the possibility that disabled people might have jobs.) What facilities do disabled cyclists need employers to provide? Are they covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)?

I'd like to see information about adapting regular bikes with kit such as the dual brake lever, made for use with tandems, which allows a one-handed rider full braking. If disabled people know what to ask for, a good cycle shop should be able to assemble it, but they are not necessarily used to solving those problems.

I'd like discussion of whether current traffic planning for cycles is accessible for users of non-standard bikes such as tricycles and tandems, and

whether the DDA could be used to fight for such provision. And can disabled people who want to start using a bicycle to increase their independence use Direct Payments or Access to Work to help them do so?

And I would also like to see some discussion of the needs of elderly and frail riders. Quiet and traffic-free routes are becoming increasingly common; trikes and cycles with a low step-through or electric assist can provide an invigorating alternative to mobility scooters.

What is lacking in all this is any concept of independent living, any sense that some of us ride cycles for transport

As with so much else in disability, the primary discussion should not be about special provision, but about the removal of barriers. Our leading cycling organisations should be playing a major part in that fight. And if that means the Cyclists Touring Club campaigning for changes in Access to Work legislation, I'm not complaining.

→ Have your say

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politics



Lord Ashley **jacks** it in

Forty years after setting up a cross-party group to raise the profile of disability issues in parliament, Lord Jack Ashley is stepping down as its chair.

Sunil Peck marks his retirement

Although Lord Ashley of Stoke is sad to be stepping down, he hopes that he has done his bit to convince MPs and peers that disabled people are not objects of charity and are individuals with rights and aspirations worth fighting for.

His fellow disabled parliamentarians are quick to pay tribute to his achievements

Lord Ashley set up the All Party Disabling Group, now the All Party Parliamentary Disability Group (APPDG), at a time when he was still coming to terms with the isolation he

was experiencing as a result of losing his hearing. Indeed, he doubted his ability to pursue his career as a politician to the extent that he came close to packing it in.

"When I founded the group, our job was to make people take disability seriously. There has been an enormous change, but there is still a lot to be done."

One of the group's biggest roles was in the fight for anti-discrimination legislation and the establishment of a commission for disability rights.

According to Baroness Rosalie Wilkins, the

influence of the APPDG is down to Lord Ashley's charm and powers of persuasion, attributes that ensured the group had support among MPs and peers from day one.

"The fact that he ensured it had strong cross-party support was a clever political move. He used that strength to have a very influential voice in all the campaigns he has been involved with."

Since the APPDG's inception, the committee has convened regularly to debate legislation affecting disabled people. But it has also acted as a forum giving disability groups the chance to speak to ministers face to face during meetings.

As Baroness Jane Campbell puts it: "Lord Ashley created a space whereby all disabled people felt important and listened to. What could be more important than that?"

Anne Begg MP thinks that Lord Ashley's deafness has also played an important role in attracting support for the APPDG's campaigns.

"He has spoken with huge authority when it comes to disability issues. Up till the point when he was in parliament, any discussion was always about someone

else's experience, not from their own."

David Blunkett talks about Lord Ashley's tenacity and zeal for campaigning which has characterised his work with the APPDG and in the chamber.

Lord Ashley created a space whereby all disabled people felt important and listened to. What could be more important than that?

Lord Ashley says that he will carry on banging the drum for disability rights. He continues to raise issues in the House relevant to disabled people, and his independent living bill is still going through the Lords.

He is also at pains to reassure disabled people that the APPDG will carry on its work with someone new at the helm.

"The APPDG tries to give disabled people new rights over their lives and more independence. It is a big undertaking, but the APPDG will carry on campaigning on those important issues."

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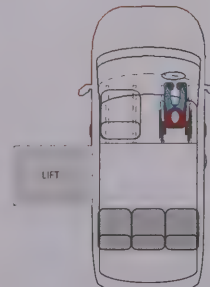
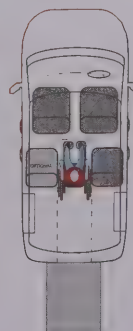
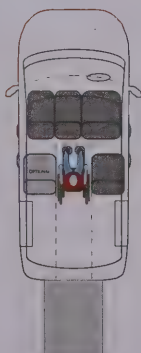
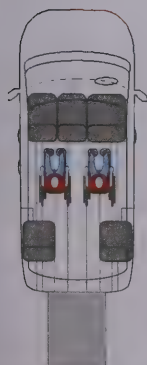
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mediawatch

Nightmares and fairytales

Children's TV presenter Cerrie Bernell remains confident of her appeal to children despite parental sniping says **Ian Macrae**

Cerrie Bernell has written a play. "It's called *Winged*," she tells me, spelling out the word in the interests of clarity.

"It's about a fairy who's born with one wing and they make her a false wing out of petals which she refuses to wear. The main thread of the story relates directly to disability."

As someone recently at the centre of a media storm over her right to be on television and the ludicrous idea that this new recruit to the presentation team on CBeeBies, (the BBC's channel for three to six year olds,) is frightening to her audience, Cerrie is very calm.

"I certainly don't take it personally. I think I'm facing the same discrimination that any disabled person in my place would face."

Two months into her new role as co-presenter on the Channel's Bedtime Hour, Cerrie was the subject of hostile feedback from a number of parents. There were claims that her

impairment made her so frightening that children would have nightmares. Other parents objected to having to face difficult issues and questions with their young families. While she accepts that it was the fact that she has a media profile which gave the row momentum, Cerrie knows that such medieval attitudes have roots which go much deeper.

"It's part of a wider problem and typical of the discrimination that disabled people face in all professions. It's great that people have been made aware that such attitudes exist, but, you know, all disabled people know that they do."

Her five month old daughter, Amelie, is making her own very vocal contribution to our conversation and it's clear from her smiles that she's frightened neither of her mother's impairment nor mine. But what about Cerrie's TV audience?

"Children I've met in the street are just excited to meet someone from the

It's great that people have been made aware that such attitudes exist, but, you know, all disabled people know that they do

telly. Some of them ask me about my arm. One little girl said 'You've got one arm and I've got one hairclip', and off she went. So little kids, they notice, but then they're off chasing a butterfly or counting pebbles."

And parents she's met similarly in passing say that their children love watching her.

Auditioning for the CBeeBies job was a whole new ballgame in comparison to her previous theatrical experience.

There were two auditions and the second was six hours long and you had to do lots of different things with different people. I'm used to going for jobs where there are maybe 20 people up for the part and this



BBC/ ANDREW HAYES WATKINS

time there were over a thousand.

She loves the freedom the CBeeBies job gives her – “we’re given permission to be as creative and as silly as we like” – her approach to being a disabled person in that role is entirely matter of fact. BBC publicity shots all show her right arm to the fore, all part of her overt statement.

“There aren’t enough disabled people on telly. If there were more, this wouldn’t have happened. The fact that I’m one of the first children’s TV presenters, that’s what should be shocking.

But Cerrie’s real professional love remains acting, maybe one day playing her own creation, that disabled assertive, out and proud fairy.

→ Have your say

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Rooms for improvement



Ruth Patrick says that any celebrations of the first birthday of the Local Housing Allowance should be muted because of the Government's failure to take account of the various needs of disabled people in private rented housing

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) replaced Housing Benefit last year. The LHA rules state that a single person, whether disabled or not, is only entitled to benefit that covers the market rent of a one-bedroom property in the local authority where they live.

This rule applies even where the disabled person requires an extra room for a full-time carer. They are expected to meet the shortfall out of their own income.

The only alternative is to apply to the local authority for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to meet the additional costs.

The problem with DHPs is that they are discretionary. There are no rules governing how a local authority should distribute them and to whom.

Similar problems arise where families require extra rooms for disabled children. For example, if a family includes two children under the age of ten, they are only entitled to two bedrooms, one for the parents and one which the children are expected to share.



These rules are unchanged even where one of these children is disabled, thereby undermining their dignity and their rights to privacy.

Unbelievably, given the demand for LHA and the fact that one in four private renters is disabled, it was not subject to a Disability

Impact Assessment.

To assess the impact of LHA on people's lives, one only has to look at the story of Sarah*. Sarah rents a private two-bedroom flat to accommodate herself and her full-time carer. Again, LHA means that only the rent value of a one-bedroom flat is met by the council.

She and her family have applied to their local authority for a DHP to meet the shortfall but have been refused. So Sarah has to rely on her parents paying the extra rent, a situation that places a financial burden on the family and also detracts from Sarah's efforts to live independently.

Linda Burnip, campaign co-ordinator of the Local Housing Allowance Reform Group, says: "The current regulations relating to size criteria in the Local Housing Allowance regulations are both discriminatory and a barrier to independent living for disabled people."

The Local Housing Allowance Reform Group, with many of the major disability charities, is asking James Purnell to agree to an urgent review of this legislation, in the hope of introducing secondary legislation to change the rules.

It can only be hoped that the reform group's calls will be heard and changes made to end the unjust and inequitable nature of LHA.

* Name changed.

• If you would like to get involved in the campaign you can contact the reform group by emailing: linda_burnip@yahoo.co.uk. Alternatively, there is a facebook group 'Local Housing Allowance Reform Group'

worldview

Prague spring II

The revolution's still velvet

If you're disabled in Eastern Europe, move to Prague, says **Radek Musílek** (photo, below). The city has made huge advances since the end of Communism

This autumn it will be the 20th anniversary of the fall of Czechoslovakia's

Communist regime. I was only ten at the time but old enough to be amazed by the changes that quickly took place. People got their freedom and democracy back, the security of socialism was replaced by the benefits and insecurities of capitalism and Czechoslovakia dissolved into two states – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – though it didn't take long before Czechs and Slovaks came together again inside the European Union.

The 1989 Velvet Revolution also brought great changes for disabled people. The previous regime had acted as if disabled people didn't exist. Despite the good standard of health care, the state had no idea how to integrate disabled people into mainstream society. Quality of life was low and opportunities were scarce. Using public transport was hazardous;



most schools and offices were no-go zones. Disabled children were institutionalised; adults were sent to work in cooperatives for the disabled.

I know from personal experience the struggle my parents went through with the authorities to get me into an ordinary school. Officially there was no ban on disabled people but

The Czech Republic now does pretty well by disabled people, and very much better than Eastern Europe

nobody actually provided any help. Every day, my mother had to carry me up

the stairs herself and I was only allowed into class because my teacher took on the responsibility for me herself. (The head teacher, a Communist Party apparatchik, wouldn't have anything to do with me.)

With the change of regime, disabled people's problems were suddenly talked about in public. Our numbers came as a surprise to many, because the topic had been covered up until then, and we became a political issue, breaking a taboo of 45 years.

Over the past 20 years, a lot of progress has been made, though there's of course still room for improvement. Even today we come across people who automatically regard wheelchair users as less intelligent or feel awkward in their company, though that's probably true throughout the world. In fact, I know several disabled people in other European countries who say much the same – a small consolation because, having been cut off for almost half a century, we've always tended to regard everything Western as better.

I'm grateful for the new chances. I was able to finish grammar school on equal terms with able-bodied schoolmates and enjoyed the new accessibility offered by Prague's Charles



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improvements in hiring policies. I was lucky because I have a master's degree, I'm completely independent and I live in Prague, where there's pretty much full employment. But elsewhere, and for people with less education, jobs are hard to find even if you're able-bodied. Also, although companies are mandated to employ a quota of disabled people, most companies prefer to flout the law and pay fines instead. There are also cases of potentially employable people staying at home and living off benefits.

Prague has benefited from economic growth and tourism, though one still has to check which metros and tram stations and buses are accessible: not all are, which means that wheelchair users may have to take roundabout routes. Sometimes, also, developers fail to provide adequate access, because of inadequate oversight by the authorities, or to cut costs, or because disabled people are too rarely consulted.

In short, I'll welcome our country's ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It won't lead to instant changes but it should constitute another step towards the improvement of disabled people's lives in the Czech Republic.

University. I studied as a history and humanities teacher, got a regular job and took up various hobbies including curling – the Scottish game played on ice – which has also brought me opportunities to travel (three times) to the UK.

I'd say that the Czech Republic now does pretty well by disabled people, and very much better than Eastern Europe. (To see what things used to be like,

go to Russia.) Today, public buildings and offices have to be accessible and new flats are built with special facilities. Access on public transport is getting better and the scope of social services is widening. A new law ensures that people get benefits based on how much they rely on other people's help. In addition, a seriously disabled person gets a pension equal to one third of the Czech average

monthly wage, and that doesn't debar them from picking up other earnings. Every five years seriously disabled people also get a contribution towards the purchase of a motor vehicle and there are other contributions and benefits.

Of course, we'd all like the level of support that people in Scandinavia get. We'd like less bureaucracy as well, and perhaps, most important, we'd like big

onetowatch



Louis' lack of shame

Was Louis Kissau a shoo-in to play the part of a character that popped out of a boot? No, he says the audition process was nerve-wracking but the 16 year-old debuted as BSL-user Danny in Channel 4's *Shameless* on 10 March, in a storyline that saw him smuggled from Ibiza to Manchester in the boot of a car. Now back at school, Louis drops his A Level Art commitments to colour in between the lines of *Disability Now's* *One to Watch* questions and tells us why deaf people need glasses.

What's the best thing about being disabled?

You can't beat the feeling of getting in the exit of the queues of rollercoaster rides – such a guilty pleasure.

What makes you angry?

People being overly sensitive about deafness; as if it's anything wrong.

If you were Prime Minister what one thing would you do to improve things for disabled people?

I would fund schools to help deaf people to cope with the bigger hearing world and open up more opportunities like the one I had.

What's the one thing that could be invented to make your life as a disabled person better?

Hearing aids are already around so perhaps some cool glasses that enable subtitles in real life conversations!

What do you most like about acting?

I love bringing myself to play someone else, someone different from me.

And what do you not like about it?

Well, the number of takes you do for such small scenes and the painful auditions.

Who's your favourite disabled person ever?

I'm no classical fan, but Ludwig van Beethoven was slowly going deaf, which is just amazing considering his music.

Do you have any special or hidden talent?

I like to play guitar and paint.

If you didn't have your impairment, which other one would you like to have for a day?

I have no idea: one that involves sleeping.

How would you sum yourself up in ten words or less?

Gosh, I have no idea: a nice decent chap.

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our 10 questions. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment, business, the media or beyond

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Opening up the asylum

When *Sectioned* by John O'Donoghue landed in the *Disability Now* office the Editor scratched his chin and thought: "Who do I know who's mental and Irish?" **Kelly Mullan** had a jar with the author and discussed labels



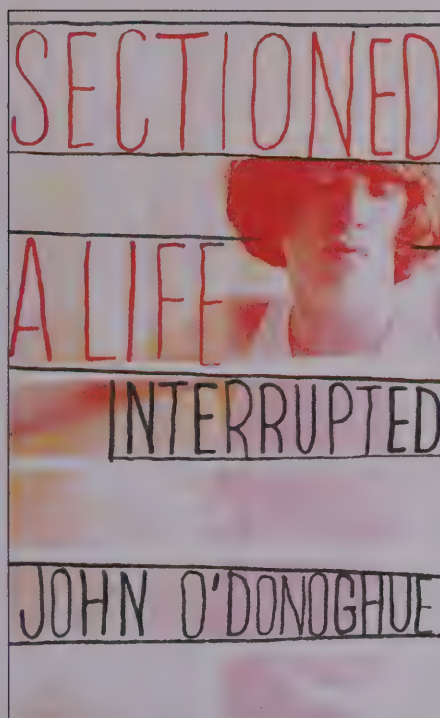
John O'Donoghue first got his foot in the revolving door of the mental health system when he was sectioned in 1975 aged 16. He spent the next 14 years rebounding round a circuit of psychiatric hospitals, sheltered housing, homeless hostels and squats.

In his autobiography, *Sectioned* (see right), O'Donoghue recalls the power relations at work on the ward and how alternatively desperate and absurd some situations appeared to him as a bright 16 year old thrown into an adult world: "[Group] Therapy is becoming like a mad cabaret turn...Only a stunning performance is going to get any attention...The Indian woman is manic. She used to be one of their own, a psychiatrist, privy to secrets, theirs and ours... a mad shrink is worse than a bent copper, and this woman's madness is a sign that even our doctors are mortal, like us can crack and go crazy."

Such shrewd observations allow his publishers to sell *Sectioned* as "a *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* of our time".

O'Donoghue was born in London to Irish parents and he has an ear for dialogue to delight the diaspora – or as he calls us: "the Murphia". He beams broadly when his autobiography is compared to Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. But it's not just the themes of poverty and immigration that remind me of McCourt's memoir; it's the poignant story of O'Donoghue's guilt-ridden relationship with his mother.

Sectioned recalls the break-up of his loving family home when he was 14 and the decision that haunted him: "When my father died, I stayed off school to look after my mother...She took to wandering the roads and was soon taken into hospital. The social



worker asked me if I wanted to be fostered and I said yes."

He wanted to "emigrate to the middle class, get help with the homework, get qualifications and swing back for my mother". His aspirations didn't work out in time to rescue his mother. There's acute regret but no self-pity.

He says: "I didn't want to write a 'misery memoir'. I wanted to put my story in a social context." For O'Donoghue the personal is political. He attributes the problems he faced as much to macro as to micro factors: "Manic depression? The victim of circumstance? A casualty of Thatcherism?"

Sectioned knits together the fabric of his zigzag life, weaving a social history of the erstwhile asylum system, threaded through with a seam of black humour. O'Donoghue is ambivalent about the old asylums and about the plethora of labels he's picked up on his way through them: disabled, bipolar, survivor and chippy working class oik.

"I identify with the disability movement, as that's about campaigning for rights and raising awareness, but I don't like labelling. The only label I like is 'survivor'. It

came out of America and says 'we didn't ask to be incarcerated but we survived it'. I like that.

"I'm chippy about the label of disability: I don't want a diagnosis to define me, to be my destiny. Chippy is one of the words that's been thrown at me. It's the kind of word that middle class English people use about belligerent oiks like me, who feel a deep sense of injustice about many things. So I am chippy, though never fishy and it's being chippy that gets me through.

"I think I'll go on resisting labels to the grave. They all sound like put-downs, an excuse for some big bad nutter to do away with you: come in Mr Hitler and the Eugenacists! In a couple of generations, if we're not careful, people like us will be genetically modified out of existence."

I didn't want to write a 'misery memoir'. I wanted to put my story in a social context

Perhaps O'Donoghue wrestles with labels because his love of words has been vital for his survival. He says: "Poetry was as much of a place of refuge as anywhere. It was an imaginative place I could go. I could work things out. I could be something else."

When asked if there's a link between bipolar disorder and creativity he says: "It's something I wouldn't want to be without. My creativity lies with my personality. The great thing about my life now is that I can go to those places and come back. All the publicity around the book launch is slightly illusory. I had some 'phenomena', a few delusional experiences. I tell my wife and we try to manage it. Before, →

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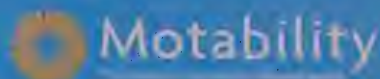
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KELLY MULLAN

"It was like the dissolution of the monasteries. Enoch Powell was behind it. The cost was a burden on the NHS and the long-stay thing was very sad: there were people in there since the 20s and 30s."

Thatcher's eviction from Downing Street coincided with O'Donoghue's exit from the mental health system when in true triumph-over-tragedy style he broke the cycle and came in from the fringes of society. He says: "I came up through the asylums and then another set of institutions: the universities. They've got a lot in common: grounds/campuses, something to do everyday, meals, a collegiate system and camaraderie."

These days O'Donoghue is a lecturer in creative writing and lives in Brighton with his wife and four children. He feels reverberations from his experiences in the 80s in the current economic crisis: "What we're facing now is the end of Thatcherism. We had the repeal of clause four in the Labour party and now banks are being nationalised: something odd is going on."

"If Barack Obama doesn't represent a return to idealism I don't know who does. Why shouldn't we want the best for each other? In a capitalist system we'll always have inequality: 'We're all in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars.'"

Sectioned does follow the pattern of the inspiring-tale-of-triumph-over-tragedy, but O'Donoghue's gift for spinning compelling yarns lifts this material out of the suffering-saga-tag remainders bin. *Sectioned* should be compulsory reading for anyone working in the mental health system: they'll laugh, they'll cry, they'll think twice before using ECT. ■

• *Sectioned: A Life Interrupted*; publisher: John Murray; ISBN-10: 1848540132; £12.99

I identify with the disability movement, as that's about campaigning for rights and raising awareness, but I don't like labelling

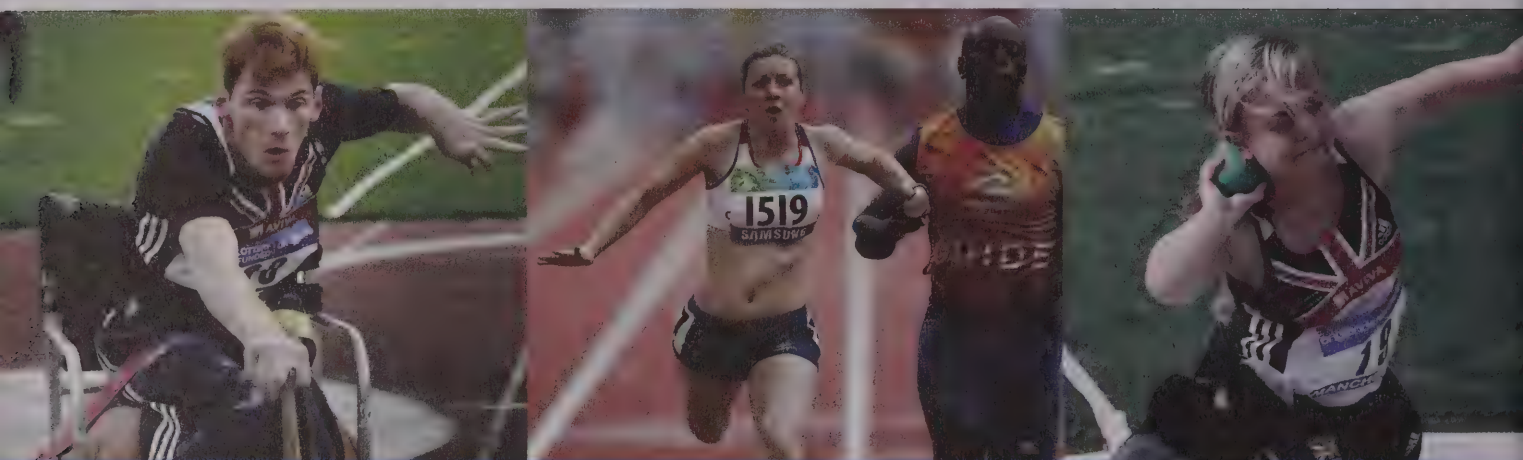
"A lot else about the regime was very good: the sense of routine, occupational therapy, even the food was good back in those days."

"At their best, asylums offered a removal from stresses and strains, a chance to recharge, and the grounds were part of that: there was something healing in those grounds. Now they're all converted into yuppie flats. Friern is now Princess Park where Ashley Cole met what's-her-name Cole."

I'd have been moored there. Now because of my wife and through writing I've found a resilience."

O'Donoghue is critical of the medical approach to mental illness, arguing that the old asylum system allowed time and space for recovery: "Drugs are not the panacea that practitioners think they are. Getting well was mostly a process that always seems to take a long time."

"I'm very much against electro-convulsive therapy (ECT). When practitioners don't know what else to do, ECT is the treatment of last resort. To me it was Pavlovian. I wanted to stay there in the asylum, where it was safe and secure, and ECT was the deterrent: 'Stay here and this is what we'll do to you.'"



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The gender agenda

Disabled women tell *Disability Now* about sexual threats and abuse while in mixed-sex wards in mental health facilities.

Cathy Reay asks, is the Government's thinking and policy muddled on questions of patient safety

I was once put in a room opposite a man who had strangled his wife. Given that I had a long history of being physically abused, the fact that this man could access my private space at any time made me feel more vulnerable than I did before I was admitted."

More than a decade later, mental health service user Glynis Stirling, from London, like hundreds of other patients, still feels unsafe in an environment that is supposed to

protect her and help her recovery.

A recent Conservative Party report revealed the startling figure that around 36 per cent of today's mental health service users are still being treated in mixed-sex conditions, 13 years after the then Labour Opposition first criticised the Government for not enforcing nationwide same-sex mental health wards.

"I once found a male patient wandering around the female bedroom

area. Staff removed him but it scared us and made me feel very uncomfortable with the security on our ward," added Sue Toms, from Berkshire.

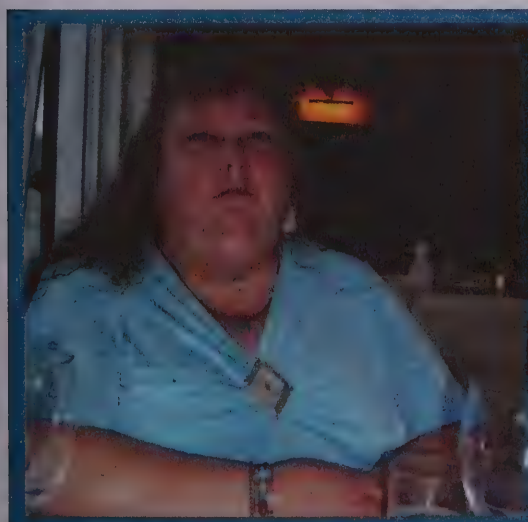
In the same month, health minister Lord Darzi of Denham told the House of Lords that a manifesto pledge by Labour to abolish these wards when they came into government in 1997 simply was "an aspiration that cannot be met".

"The message from politicians and Government has been and still is very confusing and needs addressing," said Dr Trevor Turner, member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. "They made this promise to abolish mixed-sex 'wards' but their take on what a ward actually is has always been very careful to refer to it instead as a 'facility.'"

The message from politicians and Government has been and still is very confusing and needs addressing

Lord Darzi instead said that the solution is single-sex bays within mixed-sex wards, where male and female beds and washing facilities are separated by partitions or walls. These wards have a recreational area for both sexes and some also have a women only area. Many units were already following this design and others are in the process of changing but the safety of this set-up is still disputed; according to a Government report, the number of reported sexual incidents in wards between 2003 and 2005 was over 122, including 19 rapes.

"A male patient came up to me once and said 'if I wear two condoms can I have sex with you?' I'm strong enough to say bugger off but other women are more vulnerable; I've seen it happen," →



"I once found a male patient wandering around the female bedroom area. Staff removed him but it scared us and made me feel very uncomfortable with the security on our ward"

Sue Toms from Berkshire



“I was pushed up against a wall and felt up by a male patient but again others received much worse treatment”

Dolly Sen from London

said former mental health service user Janey Antoniou, from London, who has stayed in a mixed-sex ward that follows the new design.

“Nurses do police the wards [I stay on] and most people follow the rule, but I have had to tell men to get out of the girls’ bedrooms before.”

Dolly Sen, also from London, added: “I was pushed up against a wall and felt up by a male patient, but again others received much worse treatment. You could just be sitting in the recreation room and men would come



Dolly Sen's arty representation of the mental health system

up to you and ask for a blowjob. When you say no, they get angry.”

Ian Hullat, a mental health adviser at the Royal College of Nursing, said that the Government has acknowledged that their progress in eradicating mixed-sex mental health wards hasn't been “too fast.”

Further evidence suggesting that mixed-sex wards are dangerous is in the Conservatives' report on mental health wards, released in January, in which one ward recalls a situation where “a female patient was found lying in bed with a male patient. They appeared to be only lying on the bed fully clothed, yet the female patient is currently very uninhibited and vulnerable.”

Despite the findings of this report, Mr Hullat said the Royal College doesn't particularly feel mixed-sex wards are dangerous. He added: “there have been instances where patients feel threatened and it is the responsibility of psychiatrists and nurses to make sure that they feel safe.”

Dr Michele Hampson, adult mental health consultant at Nottingham Healthcare Trust, said that it is women's vulnerability and patients' overall lack of choice that is the concern. But she doesn't necessarily believe single-sex wards are the answer: “Shouldn't wards be separated by level of disturbance? If that can't happen then the ideal set-up is mixed wards with women and men only sections, and a mixed area too, all of which should be equally staffed.

Often women only areas are left unsupervised and patients are too scared to use them as a result. It is possible to be more creative with this but ultimately people should be admitted to a ward appropriate to their care, which is not segregated by gender.”



“The staff wouldn't allow me to dress as a woman on a men only ward. They didn't let me shave and would call me only by my male name”

Alice from Northern Ireland

“I'm in a minority, I think, because I actually prefer mixed-gender wards,” said former mental health service user Fi Woods, from Bristol. “I can't imagine being stuck in a ward with just women. My ward was recently renovated and there is now a ‘women's only' lounge. Why should women get preferential treatment?

“I don't feel any need for separation; we're all human and should be able to be around each other.”

Dr Hampson's suggestion of separating wards by level of disturbance rather than sex might also be a more ideal approach for minority groups, such as transgendered patients like Alice from Northern Ireland, who has been ill-treated on a single-sex ward.



“A scary-looking male security guard would come in during the middle of the night and shine a torch on our faces to check on us” Josie Fletcher from London

“The staff wouldn’t allow me to dress as a woman on a men only ward. They didn’t let me shave, forcing me to grow a beard, and would call me only by my male name. They verbally punished me and treated me like I was brain-dead.

“I felt very threatened by the other men on the ward. If I am on a solely

male ward I’m not happy but if I was on a female ward the women wouldn’t be happy either, so I think I am better placed in a mixed-sex ward.”

Dolly Sen said that, while she said she prefers staying on single-sex wards, her “most violent” experience was actually in a same-sex unit, though she added: “With women you can get

up and walk away and you don’t have to worry about people attacking you in your sleep.”

Perhaps what we should be asking the Government to address, then, is the requirement for, firstly, more patient-sensitive and secure methods of ensuring patients’ safety (Josie Fletcher, London, recalls: “A scary-looking male security guard would come in during the middle of the night and shine a torch on our faces to check on us”) and to consider giving patients a choice of facility, whether mixed-sex or single-sex.

Disability Now asked the Department of Health (DoH) whether this would be a viable option and their reply was that there are currently “no plans to offer this level of choice”. A spokeswoman added: “Good progress on mixed-sex



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accommodation in mental health has been made and 70 per cent of available beds across the mental health estate are in single rooms. We recognise that appropriate gender separation on mental health units is essential for privacy, dignity and safety."

However, Claudia Hammond, presenter of BBC Radio 4 programme on mental health *All In The Mind* and lecturer in Psychology at Boston University's London base, agreed that dividing patients by gender "doesn't suit everyone".

"It is of course the case that not all aggression will be aimed at a member of the opposite sex, which does make this a very difficult area.

"Perhaps one day there could be a system where every patient has a place in a hospital that takes into account his



Many mental health service users use art to express themselves, like the above (submitted by anonymous)

or her personal preferences for ward companion and feels like a genuine place of sanctuary. This would be expensive so I fear this could be a long way off, but in the meantime the option of a single-sex ward could at least

provide some more people with the feeling that they're in a place of safety."

Though many of the mental health service users that spoke to *Disability Now* admit that security on wards has gradually improved, they have a long way to go before patients will stop feeling vulnerable and in danger of being put at risk.

It has been suggested that the NHS are resistant to change but it seems Government are insistent on leading them in the wrong direction. From the number of reported assaults alone that occur on a yearly basis on mixed-sex wards with single-sex bays, it is important that the Government reconsider their plan and prioritise patient safety to ensure that their experience in hospital is regenerative, not degenerative. ■

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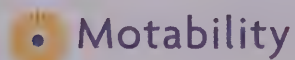
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yourviews

Living and dying with dignity

Penny Pepper's response to the story of my mother, Dr Anne Turner (*A short stay in clicheland, Disability Now March 2009*) fails to make a crucial distinction between the lives of disabled people and those of the terminally ill.

Society's response to disability should correctly be acceptance and adaptation. Our response to terminal illness should be to ease symptoms to the full extent possible, but ultimately to recognise that a natural death may cause unbearable suffering to some people.

At any moment in the progression of a terminal illness, a patient's symptoms may appear superficially to be comparable with those of someone living with a chronic disability. When my mother had an assisted death at Dignitas in Switzerland, she was, as Penny points out, relatively able-bodied and would not have qualified for an assisted death under the legislation which Dignity in Dying proposes for the UK.



BBC PICTURES

Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) would ultimately have left her paralysed, unable to move any muscle in her body, and unable even to communicate with her carers.

At all stages in her future illness, my mother would have been experiencing a loss of capability. This contrasts with disabled lives where, with the right help, people learn to cope with their impairment and often experience an increase in quality of life. There is no upside in terminal illness.

What I would like is to avoid the moral fudge

whereby we will stand and watch someone starve and dehydrate themselves to death, because we are too cowardly to give them the personal freedom to end their own lives.

Suicide is not a solution to impairment; it should not even be our first response to terminal illness. But in the restricted circumstances of the final stages of a terminal illness, and subject to safeguards, I believe it should be an available choice in a compassionate and civilised society.

Edward Turner,
London W1

Penny Pepper is wrong in thinking that euthanasia is explicitly or implicitly connected to disability. Euthanasia is about painlessly ending life and thereby sparing a person from incurable pain and suffering. It is about choice, the choice to decide where and when to end life and by exercising that choice an individual can die with dignity in a time and place of their choosing.

The discussion for disabled people is that we do not have equal access to suicide. If I wished to jump on an aeroplane and zoom off to Switzerland for a short, one way visit, I would need the help of carers. These carers would be acting illegally if they were to help me. Effectively my access to suicide is restricted simply because of my disability; for this very reason I would have thought that many disabled people would support legalising euthanasia.

Philip Tribe, by email

Fessing up to blue badge bay abuse

I must reply to Michael Higham and Robert Taylor (*Your views, Disability Now January 2009*).

I look fit and healthy, but my situation is that I have an unnamed muscle and nerve illness that my consultant describes as "a sub-set of muscular dystrophy" which leaves me in constant pain and unable to use my muscles for any length of time without being in agony.

I cannot use public transport because I MUST have a seat for any journey, because trying to stand on a swaying vehicle rapidly results in agony. I also find most public transport seats unbearably uncomfortable.

Now I think that means I am disabled, but because I can walk to the nearest bus-stop I am considered to be too fit to need a blue badge.

So how do I go shopping? My choice of vehicle is a Toyota Hi-Lux 4x4 pickup truck (which I like because the seat is at bum height when I stand next to it, so no painful bending and heaving to get in and out). I park in a disabled bay because they are close to the entrance to the supermarket.

If I parked at any distance from the entrance I would have to use a lot of my

"walking ration" simply getting to the entrance and back to my truck, leaving me insufficient to do my shopping.

So if you have seen an apparently fit pickup driver parking in a disabled bay without showing a blue badge, then it may have been me.

David Girling, by email

Safety at the wheel

I read Spencer Arnott's letter (*Your views, Disability Now, March 2009*) in which he questions the ability of people with dexterity problems to drive safely.

Whilst Mr Arnott is clearly right in that the safety of other road users is of paramount importance and must take precedence over a person's liberty to drive, the suggestion that anyone with a dexterity problem cannot drive safely is patent nonsense! I suffer from athetoid cerebral palsy and cannot use coin machines or pick up any drink without spilling it all over and yet, like many of my friends with cerebral palsy, I have driven for 30 years without any untoward incident. Mr Arnott clearly doesn't understand that the nature and capacities of people with conditions like cerebral palsy, and that people's degree of control and

dexterity, can vary dramatically depending on the task. Now it is freely acknowledged that many people with very complex disabilities, who were once considered unable to drive, can do so and do it safely!

Harold Sharpe JP, North Matlock, Derbyshire

Accessing the scene

As a woman who regularly goes out on the 'gay scene' in one northern city in particular, I am struck at how little is done to include or even facilitate for people who have disabilities.

In our city we have a number of gay bars and not one of them is fully accessible for people who use wheelchairs or need assistance to walk. There is no concept from the bar owners and managers that people may have additional needs and that they have a duty to ensure that their premises are accessible and, indeed, inclusive. In fact, the Disability Discrimination Act appears not to apply if you are LGBT and wish to access the mainstream scene.

This is something that I would like to change and I have compiled a short

questionnaire (*see link below*). I would really appreciate it if as many people as possible could complete it, and give feedback about how you have found it when trying to access the commercial gay scene and what you would like to change. Please also feel free to leave your email address and I will contact you with future developments.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=G9nFTThVcU9Sk9rYyeYGqPQ_3d_3d
Sarah Carmody, by email

Commission omission

I am disappointed with the Human Rights Commission (*News view, Disability Now, March 2009*). While the head of the Commission makes statements endlessly about racism and sexism, hardly anything is ever said about disablism and ageism. The minister for disabled people is totally anonymous, serving time until the promotion comes along. The Government says it's always looking to cut costs, well what about cutting these ineffective posts?

Danny Hudson, by email

→ Have your say

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- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Shouldering the burden of care

As demographics indicate a greater need for social care, **Andy Rickell** ponders the ins and outs of its provision by the state

Government is very worried about the increasing cost of the "social care" budget particularly due to the increasing number of older people needing support, or as I would call them, older disabled people. It is currently consulting about how this might be changed before, I suspect, making proposals to make disabled people pay more for their own care.

It is right for all governments to seek to use public money efficiently and to judge which costs should be borne by the state and which by people themselves, making the case to voters.

But it feels really weird that we are having that debate at all. In a society where the state provides education and health services free at the point of use, it seems odd that social support, which is clearly about meeting individual need, should not automatically be part of the same welfare state package. In comparison

to the costs of education and health, social support is small beer and free social support is easily affordable, if Government is prepared to make the case to voters. Certainly the disabled people I have talked to think that social support can only be fairly provided by the state. They don't expect

The disabled people I have talked to think that social support can only be fairly provided by the state. They don't expect a Rolls Royce service, just a standard free entitlement

a Rolls Royce service, just a standard free entitlement, like we all get in education and health, which any individual can choose to add to with their own money.

Of course, if there are many older people being paid for by relatively fewer

working age taxpayers, the affordability suffers, but perhaps it's time we discovered the idea of having an actual fund for national insurance that cannot be raided by governments, to smooth out demographic bulges.

Furthermore, Government should firstly be checking that existing social support funding is truly well spent. I hear from disabled people that they think the costs of administering social support are excessive, and significant parts of social support spending go on provision that disabled people say they don't want. To some degree personalisation and individual budgets will help to root out this wasteful spending.

If Government reduces access to state funding, the need for support remains and the burden falls elsewhere. The first

place it falls is on the disabled person. They must pay for their unmet need, go without, or get it provided by charity or unpaid family and friends. Such a burden is unfair. None of us can predict our need for support, and in many cases the need for support will be greater for those with fewer resources.

Furthermore the very meeting of the need may be a prerequisite for the disabled person to be able to earn income. There is potentially a virtuous circle whereby by providing free social support by the state it releases both the disabled person and their erstwhile family carers to all earn a living and pay the taxes that cover the state's costs. Social support is an investment, not a burden.

• **Andy Rickell is a disability rights campaigner**

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q Four years ago I was diagnosed with p/p MS. This got so bad that a year ago I had to sell the fishing boat that I skippered in north-west Scotland, partly because I couldn't climb up and down the ladders attached to the harbour wall. The harbour is Kinlochbervie (*photo, right*) and is owned and managed by the Highland Council. A new development is now going ahead there that includes a floating pontoon that's accessible by a walkway that, even with my limited mobility, I should be able to negotiate, so I had plans to buy a small boat. But when I phoned the Harbour Manager I was told that the Highland Council didn't have a disabled policy in place for its harbours and that there would be no preference for anyone with a disability, nor indeed that it had any

obligation to make any such provision. I would stress that what I had in mind was for pleasure only, not commerce. I thought that any new build had to make some provision for the disabled. Am I wrong?
Joe Larter, by email



**Aidan Crook
of the
Disability Law
Service writes:**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) does not place a specific duty on service providers or local authorities to give preferential treatment to disabled people in the provision of their services and facilities. However, the Highland Council does have other general duties to disabled people under the DDA. For instance, the DDA makes it unlawful for service providers to discriminate against disabled people in the provision of their



services, in particular by not making reasonable adjustments for them in the provision of their services under s.21 DDA 1995. Adjustment may include altering practices, policies and procedures where these put disabled people at a substantial disadvantage. In the present case, it may be a reasonable adjustment to give preference in the use of the floating pontoon to

people with mobility problems, because people with disabilities are unlikely to be able to use the harbour without use of the floating pontoon, and the ultimate aim of the DDA with regard to service provision is to allow disabled people to access services with as much ease as the rest of the public. The Highland Council is also covered by the

THE EXPERTS

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Sexual & Personal issues: **Simon Parritt**, a counselling psychologist who has studied psychosexual therapy, was the only disabled director of the

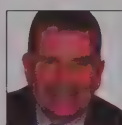
Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD).
Legal Matters: **Douglas Joy**, senior solicitor at the Disability Law Service, and his colleagues give advice on

disability and the law.
Benefits and Debt issues: The **Citizens Advice Bureau** puts its expertise at our disposal to help you.
Technology and Internet: **Léonie Watson** from digital consultancy Nomensa is here to get you

connected and keep you up and running.
Specialist or Adaptive Equipment: **John Mandrak**, for nearly 25 years a disability journalist and consultant, gives advice on the Disabled Living Foundation's helpline.

Disability Equality Duty under which the DDA requires the promotion of equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons, and requires local authorities to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons. You may therefore want to consider writing to the Highland Council reminding them of their duties under the Act and requesting that it put in place the reasonable adjustments that you require. You could also request information on the reasons for the Highland Council's failure to comply with your request under the DDA. This information can be requested by issuing a Disability Discrimination Questionnaire, a copy of which can be obtained from the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Q In the summer I flew with Air China, which lost my wheelchair for 24 hours and returned it damaged. It has admitted liability and is offering to settle for the damage under the terms of the Montreal Convention. However, for that 24-hour period when I had to use another, totally unsuitable wheelchair, with all the distress and hassle it incurred, it's offering me a derisory £27. I've emailed Air China suggesting it make a reasonable offer but I've received no reply. Is there anything else you could suggest?
Lucy Savage, by email



Andy Wright says:

Airlines are still not answerable under the DDA and as such, pursuing claims can be difficult, but the Air Transport Users Council should be able to advise. They're at CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TE. Phone 020 7240 6061

(Mon to Thurs, 9.30am to 2.30pm). Email complaints@auc.org.uk. At the same address is the Civil Aviation Authority. Phone 01293 573725. Email infoservices@caa.co.uk. Try, also, the Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline, Freepost RRLL-GHUX-CTRX, Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3EQ. Phone 0845 604 6610.

Q I'm 38 years old, disabled, and will be starting an OU course in April on counselling, which is a career I'm interested in pursuing. My problem is that I'll need to drive but can't afford lessons. Is there some sort of loan or grant I could get? I receive DLA at the highest rate (for life) and income support.
James Salmon, by email



Helen Smith replies:
That's tricky. Motability

usually only helps people aged 16 to 24 who get the Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA but in exceptional circumstances it may pay for people over 24 so it's worth applying. Try looking through the charity listings at your local library to see who donates money to individuals. (Have you tried the Rotary or Lions clubs?) As you're not yet working, the Access to Work Scheme probably won't help but see an adviser at your local job centre because driving lessons may be something they can help with once you have a job. Perhaps, also, see a doctor about getting an NHS wheelchair to help improve your mobility short term.

→ If you have a question for our panel

- phone us 020 7619 7323
- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Travel: Andy Wright is managing director of Accessible Travel, a specialist tour operator providing holidays for people with mobility impairments, and has huge experience in the travel trade.

Money management: David Clarke has spent 14 years in banking and has worked for three leading financial service providers. He is now a senior partner with Clydesdale Bank and his wealth of experience is all yours.

Access & the Environment: Agnes Fletcher is a disability trainer and consultant who can find solutions to access problems.
Property: Kate Sheehan is an independent occupational therapist with 20 years' experience and a

passionate interest in housing solutions for disabled people.

Motoring & Transport: Helen Smith of Mobilise steps outside her Disability Now column to answer your questions on car matters.

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Rogue Mail



In leaping to the defence of children's TV presenter, Cerrie Bernell, **Peter White** says the press should have gone the whole nine yards

It's never easy to suss out the stance of the *Daily Mail* on disability. The paper which delights in sniffing out cases of pub football-playing claimants of Incapacity Benefit, and any possible examples of "political correctness gone mad", nonetheless occasionally also leaps to the defence of what it sees as a "wronged" disabled individual; and happily, that's what it's chosen to do in the case of Cerrie Bernell. Cerrie, you'll remember, was set upon by a gang of blogging, pig-ignorant yobbos – it's nice to be able to use even more outspoken language than the *Mail*.

Cerrie is a new presenter on CBeebies who happens to have one arm which ends at her elbow, a circumstance which the yobbos claimed would frighten their children. The fact that the children of such yobbos must, merely by being the yobbos' children, have seen far more frightening things already in their short lives would

not occur to them. *Mail* writer Alison Pearson gave them a measured flea in their ear, and the *Mail* then gave Alison Lapper of Trafalgar Square plinth fame space to deliver one with a more acerbic bite. The paper is even more to be credited since it appears to have voluntarily given up the usually irresistible pleasure of accusing

the BBC of "political correctness gone mad", a temptation not resisted by the yobbos.

My one regret about the whole incident is that the *Mail* could have had its cake, and eaten it. It could have stood up for Cerrie, and still taken a pop at the BBC for its distinctly unambitious target of appointing only four per cent of disabled staff, when the prevalence of disability in the community, even at the most conservative estimate, is well over ten per cent. Their position was spelt out for me by former BBC director-general, Gregg Dyke, who said to a colleague that "disability

My one regret about the whole incident is that the *Mail* could have had its cake, and eaten it

was difficult". I can't tell you what he meant by that, since I could never get an appointment with him to discuss it. Instead, I went to the real judges: my grandchildren-Hannah aged six, and Paul aged four. I asked them what they thought of Cerrie Bernell. "She's good," they said. I pressed on, "But what about her arm?", I asked. "What about it?", they said.

ed cetera

Be not afraid little ones, for I shall protect you from the monster on the telly.



guestcolumn

A bit of a facer

Chris Burke (pictured, right) contacted *Disability Now* because after years of trying to fit in and being rejected, he felt he needed to let rip

Technically, I've got cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus. The brain works fine.

I've got 14 computing qualifications and an HND-equivalent.

But the face looks odd. And that's what everyone sees first.

And that's the reason that I'm stuck, at 46, in an old folks' home – a sheltered housing scheme where no other resident is under 70.

If you're a pink Shrek built by Frankenstein, it doesn't matter what you try: you're about as welcome as Tiger Woods at a KKK Golfing Convention.

I've had boiling water chucked over me, been

together and two months in hospital getting skin grafts over burns, and been beaten up and mugged more times than I care to go into.

I'm a target because I'm a spazz. I'm banned from many of the cafés and bars in my town because other people complain about having "something like that" in there. I got bounced the other evening because a bunch of construction workers said they didn't want their evening ruined by having to look at me. I've been asked to take my picture off dating sites because they don't want to be reminded what I look like.

In 46 years I've never been accepted into a group of any kind. I used to get entire classes kicking the shit out of me at school. I don't consider I have a social phobia and I'm happy to go up to anyone, but if they tell you to go forth and multiply, what do you do about it?

Younger males come out with things like "You waiting for Esmerelda, mate?" and "Not ringing any bells tonight, then?"

Younger males come out with things like 'You waiting for Esmerelda, mate?' and 'Not ringing any bells tonight, then?'

stabbed several times, had all my teeth kicked out, had to spend a month in hospital getting my jaw wired back



I get similar treatment from just about everyone and I'm beginning to realise it ain't gonna change.

What's sad is that you never hear this talked about on TV, which seems to give it tacit societal acceptance. People need something to band together against and spazzy Shreks like me seem to be it.

Physically I'm slightly disabled; mentally, I'm not. I feel I'm perfectly capable

of employment or voluntary work. But when I offer my services, people keep saying "D'you think we want to scare our customers away?" – a recent remark by a chip-shop owner when I went for a job there.

I've spent years trying to get started and nobody ever lets you. I've had idleness enforced on me to the point where I want to explode. So please – any ideas?

→ Have your say

- write to us **Disability Now**, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

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upclose&personal

Discomfort station

Harrasment in the toilet is no longer something that only happens to children at school. It can also be a worry for people throughout their adult lives



I'm Alice. I'm into fashion, handbags, perfume, book groups and promoting advocacy. I was born male and lived content for many years as a male, but during

my teenage years I felt I was born in the wrong body.

When I started to cross-dress people said: "That's wrong! You were born male; stay male!" I cross-dressed as a woman for many years

until I reached the stage where I wanted to live as a woman in daily life around the clock. I couldn't pretend any more. I wanted to wear a bra, make-up, feminine clothes and perfume and have a handbag!

Now I live as a woman and receive hormone treatment, but I'm having toilet trouble: which one do I use?

Using public toilets in high heels is like entering the lions' den. People try to take photos of me, bang on the door and chase me out in an intimidating manner.

I opt to use the disabled toilet. It's safer and it's only one person per entry, so when I close the door, no one can enter my space until I leave. I feel justified in using the disabled toilet because I am disabled: I have a learning disability. Plus, not being able to use male or female public toilets disables me, so I strongly believe I have the right to use disabled toilets.

Recently at my local bus station I ran into difficulties. I asked for the Radar key to use the disabled toilet but the woman refused to give it to me because, she said, I wasn't disabled and didn't have a key of my own. I could see she wanted an argument.

It wouldn't be so bad if the bus station staff could accept my gender situation, but they put me in the same

category as a drunk. They've been told of my situation and told not to bother me but they make fun of me and laugh at me.

I felt upset and annoyed but I had no choice but give in and use the male toilets, giving the staff the entertainment of watching the misery I had to go through. Using the male toilets, I'm always scared of being attacked, beaten up or even sexually assaulted. I also dread young people mocking me.

On this occasion, the staff knew a lot of school kids might come in and see me. Luckily, I was able to use a

Using public toilets in high heels is like entering the lions' den. People take photos, bang on the door and chase me out

toilet that became free in safety. This was no thanks to the bus station staff who gave me no support or respect. The next day I pushed for a Radar key and got it. I asked the obvious question: if I can't use the male, female or disabled toilets, where do you expect me to go? Answers on a postcard please!

• Alice asks anyone wishing to contact her to get in touch via *Disability Now*

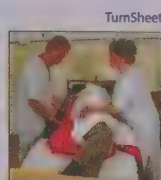
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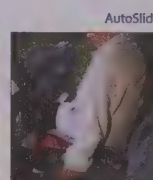
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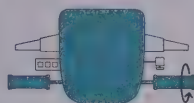
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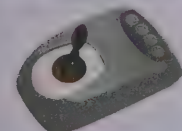
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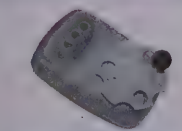
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The freedom to take control

Lara's high street lows

As *Disability Now's* fashionista, **Lara Masters'** mission was to find an ensemble – codeword Bigstyle – for under 50 quid from high street stores. Her first task, finding shops she could get into

Although, technically speaking, using an electric wheelchair means I tend to avoid actual high streets due to pesky steps at shop entrances, with a pocket full of dough, I rushed/rolled at four mph to immerse myself in the colourful cacophony of textures at North London's Brent Cross shopping centre, like a butterfly frolicking amongst the blooms of a spring garden.

However, it quickly became apparent that this butterfly was struggling to find even a nip of sweet nectar.

I am a size six with extra long legs so not all shops cater for me but, still, of the few I could visit, nothing had prepared me for the lack of glamour and chic that slapped me in the face, like the many hangers that are so unfortunately placed at wheelchair-users' eye-level. Ouch.

What exactly has the eruption of the knee-length, belted cardigan got to do with style? And why is there an invasion of tops that puff over the waist like a massive muffin? This season, are we supposed to be aspiring to look like the kind of barrel-shape that we are told is synonymous with heart disease? And there's a trend for the "box" look, created by a plague of square-shaped knitted jumpers and



cardies (perhaps to reflect our obsession with TV?)

I was distressed but I knew I couldn't let my emotions get in the way; style was my mission and there was 50 quid riding on it. I pressed on through Top Shop's rows of harem pants (apparently it's Hammer Time again, double yay! We can give the illusion of having saggy crotches and make our thighs, knees and calves look like one uninterrupted sausage). I elbowed a path through Miss Selfridge's rows of skirts with large side ruches (just in case a muffin-top, pendulous private parts and salami legs wasn't enough illusion of excess weight, in these you can easily add a stone to your hip area and, voilà, you are the Michelin Man).

I went to Next, next, and found some 40s style clothing, which I highly approved of, but was either out of my price range or out of my size. I had noticed an abundance of checked fabric proliferating throughout the high street so I flirted with a checked shirt which made me look like Dolly Parton, minus the magnificent bosom to detract from the fact that I was wearing a table-cloth.

In H&M, the cheapest store, I found the fabric quality was poor and the clothes ill-fitting. I was practically



hysterical by the time I reached River Island, grabbed a sales assistant and dragged him around the store, asking him to find me size sixes which kept him running to and from the stockroom. It was a painful process for us both and we needed a little sit down after. Metaphorically speaking. Obviously I am already sitting down; I had a mini Twix.

I flirted with a checked shirt which made me look like Dolly Parton, minus the magnificent bosom to detract from the fact that I was wearing a table-cloth

Revived, I headed for TK Maxx and its vast jumble of end of lines, incorrectly sized and packed into tight rows. After a good hour's sifting I found a top that was cheap enough and small enough for me but still I was bottomless. Propelled by the fear of being laughed out of the style section by having to model in a top and just my knickers, I raced to my last bastion of hope; Jane Norman. Here I found an oasis of good quality, if slightly expensive clothes that are made to fit a woman's body and purchased the perfect black pencil skirt (£30.)

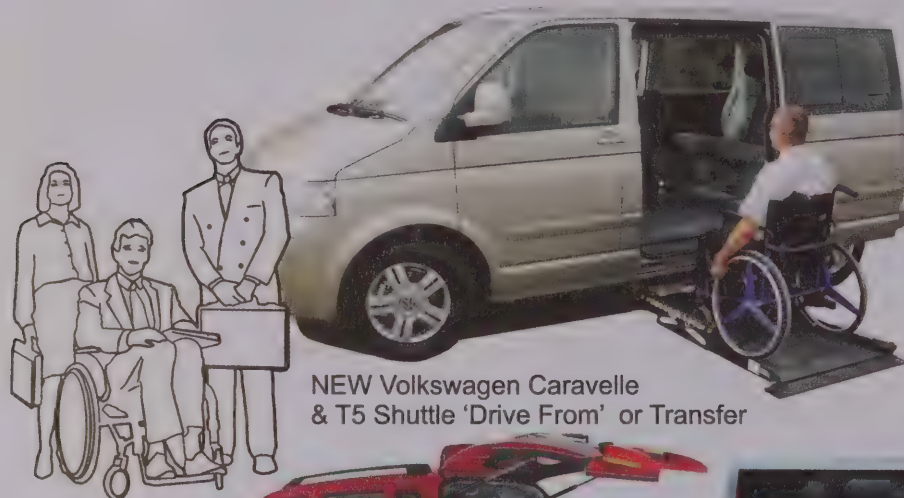
I scraped together two outfits. Pairing the skirt with a "Love to Death" tattooed basque (£16.99, TK Maxx) and choker (rose £2.99, Claire's, pinned to ribbon) I went for a punky/goth look. Then, for a more demure style I wore the skirt with a cream, sleeveless, frilled blouse (£19.99, River Island.) Ultimately, finding style on the high street for under £50 was not the walk in the park I anticipated. Fashion is currently missing its style chip but that is no excuse for us all to go around looking like boxes and muffins. ■

Wheelchair Drivers

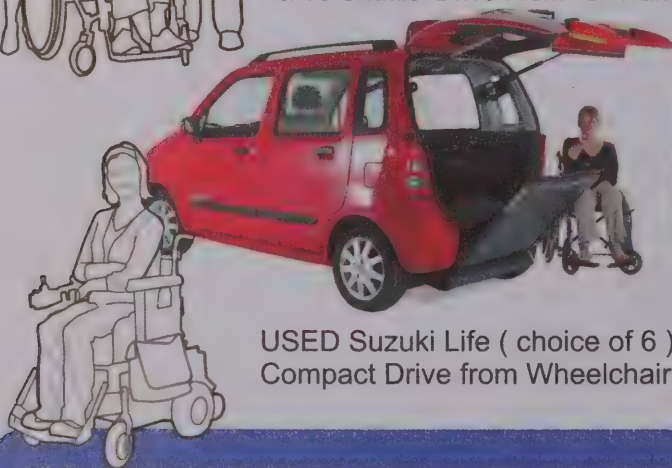
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localknowledge

Bristol's bully beef

A disability organisation in Bristol has put together a DVD, titled *In Our Own Words*, hoping to raise awareness of bullying of disabled young people. John Langley and Beth Richards, two of its stars and creators, tell **Cathy Reay** how they hope their short autobiographical film will help others to tackle bullying

John Langley, who has mobility difficulties and learning disabilities, wanted to retell his experiences of being bullied at school to help kids in the same situation now: "We wanted to make a film out of it because we know it still goes on.

"In the film we decided to reinact true life stories based on experiences we've had; there's one scene where someone in a wheelchair is bullied by the staff of an inaccessible café, which I was in, and another set in a playground where a girl is accused by her classmates of cheating on a test because she had a helper present.

"Some of the team put together a couple of cartoon-like animations which showed hard-hitting scenes of bullying. We thought they would be a more powerful way of explaining some of the stronger content and break up the way it was being put across.

"There are about 15 of us

involved in the project, all doing different things like putting together artwork, acting, writing a script. Everyone got involved in a different way.

"The DVD gives out the message that disablist bullying happens in so many different ways, and through this project we are trying to raise awareness and minimise that.

"The DVD is going to be shown in schools and colleges and we'll also have a launch here in Bristol."

Because of her learning and mobility impairments, Beth Richards required assistance in school exams and wanted to reinact a situation where she was bullied because of it. Says Beth: "I think it gives off a really strong impression. In the scene, my on-screen classmates taunt me, calling me a cheat for having a support worker present in a test. The way it is done really promotes the idea of telling someone if you are



The Listening Partnership film group pose for the camera

The DVD gives out the message that disablist bullying happens in so many different ways

being bullied. It was great to act it out and see it all come together; I love drama so I had a lot of fun making it!

"We really hope that by

showing it in schools it will show teachers how to notice bullying and do something about it."

• The Listening Partnership is a forum group for young disabled people to come together and discuss their views on life in Bristol. To find out more, call Sarah Howard on 0117 9038918 or email sarah.howard@wecil.co.uk

→ CONTACT US

Do you know of an innovative, small-scale, pilot project, ideally one run by disabled people themselves?

- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Not so little Britain

Britain! Britain! Britain! If funds won't run to a holiday abroad this year, why not look closer to home. Follow these suggestions for breaks that won't break the bank



GLASGOW CITY MARKETING BUREAU



MARK DAVIDSON



MARION BULL



DARREN MUSSON

Capital free-for-all

Marion Bull

Sunday morning, and an oversized potted palm makes its way jauntily towards Shoreditch, a pair of legs struggling under its weight. It has to be Columbia Road flower market. It's brimming with atmosphere.

East End markets are a living, vibrant, uplifting part of traditional London – and cheap. Nearby, reinvented Spitalfields (retro, young designers, speciality food), via Brick Lane, Hanover Street, and Jack the Ripper haunts, has been a market site for over 350 years.

Entertainment can cost little or nothing. Most big galleries and museums are free (excluding special exhibitions). Try the Science Museum's massive, interactive Energy Ring for your thoughts in lights – mesmerising fun!

Churches organise free concerts. St John's, Waterloo Road, even offers free



MARION BULL



wine (Tel: 0207 633 9819). The Brunei Gallery (SOAS, University of London), is the place for ethnic dance, also free. St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, has two-for-one ticket jazz evenings (£8) in the Crypt (Routiers restaurant until 9pm) if one person is a carer. All venues are accessible.

Excellent value, cheap eats are everywhere. South of the river, try TAS café's choose-your-own deli plate, next to the TAS Turkish restaurant (76 Borough High Street, SE1) for around a fiver. Almost opposite, the historic George Inn-pub sits in a cobblestone courtyard. The Square Pie (Selfridges, also at Spitalfields) and Fresh & Wild organic (69 Brewer Street, W1, limited outside seating) cost around £7.

• Megatrain.com's early-booking train bargains into London start at £1, but some long-distance destinations are served by inaccessible coaches.

Useful sites:

www.visitlondon.com

www.directenquiries.com/LDAHotels

www.hotel-assist.com

Glasgow nights...and days

Ivy Broadhead

Don't let the accent or the cold Northern weather scare you off: for a city break head to Glasgow.

Where Edinburgh is all cobbly, old-world charm, Glasgow has a bit more of a gritty, big-city feel, and beats the capital hands down on shopping and nightlife. It also has a metro, albeit not on the scale of Paris, Moscow or London, but it does make getting around the city a doddle, along with the basic grid layout of the city centre.

You can jump off the train at Central or Queen Street station and head straight to Sauchiehall or Buchanan Street to spend some crisp Scottish banknotes, or go out and spot some of the famous Charles Rennie Mackintosh architecture.



GLASGOW CITY MARKETING BUREAU

Stay central to tick off some culture at the Gallery of Modern Art, or at any of the theatres and galleries around the swanky Merchant City area, or head out to the West End for more

quirky shops and cafés instead of just the high street standards. To the east of the city, the open-air Barras market also runs every weekend for some bargain browsing.

Stroll around the winter gardens or the People's Palace to get a feel for some social history, or if architecture really is your thing, Glasgow also has one of the only medieval cathedrals in Scotland.

As night falls, there's still plenty to choose from; decent clubs, comedy venues, an Imax, and more than its share of the Scottish music scene.

To see the bright lights of a new city without crossing any oceans, Glasgow is pretty hard to beat; for a jam-packed weekend of sightseeing, or just to wander round a beautiful city and indulge in some people watching.



Vampire & chips in Whitby

Penny Batchelor

For a traditional, credit-crunch friendly British seaside break with a gothic twist, head to Whitby on England's north-east coast. Accessible by bus, rail and car, this small town has pre-medieval roots. It survived a Viking attack, became a flourishing port and inspired the writer of one of the Victorian era's most famous novels: *Dracula*.

Visit 'The Dracula Experience', based on Stoker's novel, and take a reputedly spine-chilling tour through the novel.



Entrance costs £2.50 for adults.

This year there's a new



© WHITBY ONLINE

attraction at the ruins of Whitby Abbey – a bronze, full-size replica of the famous Borghese gladiator statue. A previous cast guarded the Abbey more than 300 years ago. Whitby Abbey entrance costs £5.50 for adults, £4.70 for concessions and is free for English Heritage members.

Other attractions in Whitby include the Captain Cook museum where the famous explorer came to serve his seafaring apprenticeship in 1746. Entry is £4 or £3.50 for concessions. If the weather is good wander round

Pannett Park for free, it's an historic ornamental garden including Whitby Museum and Art Gallery. If it's raining, try the seafood or fish and chips at The Magpie Café, near Whitby Harbour.

Whitby is surrounded by the North York Moors National Park with its scenery of sea cliffs and ancient woodlands. For overnight visitors, accommodation in Whitby ranges from 4 star hotels to accessible holiday cottages – vampires not included!

Useful web links:

- www.discoveryyorkshirecoast.com/content/disability_access/disability_access_home.asp
- www.visitnorthyorkshiremoors.co.uk/content.php?nID=90
- www.iknow-yorkshire.co.uk/yorkshire_holidays/whitby/all_prices/all_types/disabled_access/

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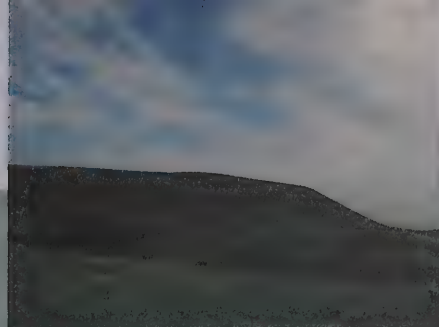
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protect them from evil. Within the graveyard is the burial site of the Nutter family, known locally as the 'Witches Grave'. Within the village there is a famous souvenir shop called Witches Galore. Sitting outside, keeping guard are three ugly ladies dressed as witches. Incidentally, the residence of Alice

Nutter was the old hall at Roughlee, known locally as 'Witches Hall'.

The 13th century abbey at Whalley was portrayed in the 19th century novel by Harrison Ainsworth, *The Lancashire Witches*. Although parts of the grounds may be difficult to access by disabled visitors, the information centre is fully accessible.

Travelling further afield you can make your way to Lancaster Castle where the trials of the accused took place, and the Golden Lion pub where they were allowed a last drink on the way to the gallows.

There is even a bus service with a difference, the Witch Way. Travel from Colne to Manchester on buses each named after one of the witches. These are fully accessible for those in wheelchairs. ■

Every witch way

Mark Davidson

Lancashire, 1612. Ten people are hung as witches. Evidence of their guilt is based solely on local gossip. Beggars at worst, they were no more able to cast spells than anyone else.

The centrepiece of the legend and stories is Pendle Hill; 1,831 feet above sea level. Each Halloween, large numbers of locals make their way to the top wearing fancy dress.

Pendle Heritage Centre in the village of Barrowford is a good place to learn about the history. Open all the year round, with full accessibility, it incorporates a museum, gift shop, tea-room and tourist information.

The parish church at Newchurch has the Eye of God carved on the bell tower, thought by locals at the time to

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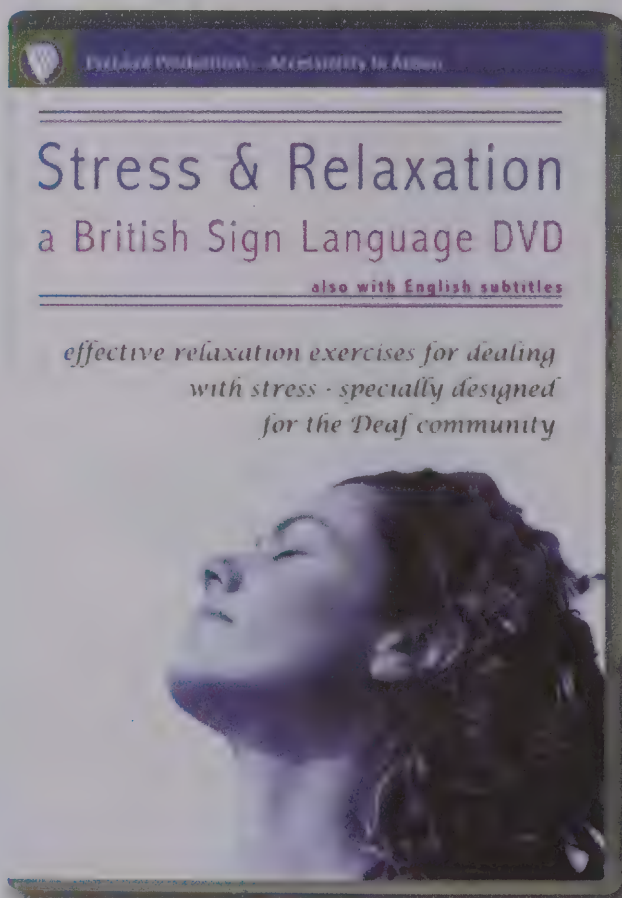
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Showing signs of stress

Living in the fast-paced world of publishing can have its effects on the most assured of hacks. Our laid-back design editor, **Jamie Trounce**, has been watching a stress-busting DVD in British Sign Language to see if it could zen him out



This DVD is designed to tell you what stress is, what its causes are and what stress can do to you. It also includes some relaxation exercises to help reduce your stress levels, and all of this is presented in British Sign Language (BSL), with the

option of also displaying English subtitles.

The DVD aims to help all BSL users learn how to relax at home to manage stress and to improve their overall health and confidence.

Stress is part of everyone's life but I think that Deaf people are sometimes

more at risk of exposure to depression, anxiety and other pressures because of the frustrations caused by being Deaf in a hearing world.

There are many reasons why stress affects Deaf people, such as not being able to communicate with hearing people in certain situations, or understand people in meetings, or hear music that helps hearing people to relax.

I'm profoundly deaf and I've suffered stress a few times, usually because I tend to think too much and get worried or paranoid when I have too many problems at the same time.

I sat down and watched the DVD, which was easy to follow, with its simple structure of introduction, definitions of stress, relaxation exercises and common questions.

The DVD explains the different types of stress – short-term stress, long-term stress, how to pace yourself, how to breathe when you feel stressed, and so on. The relaxation exercises cover things such as muscle

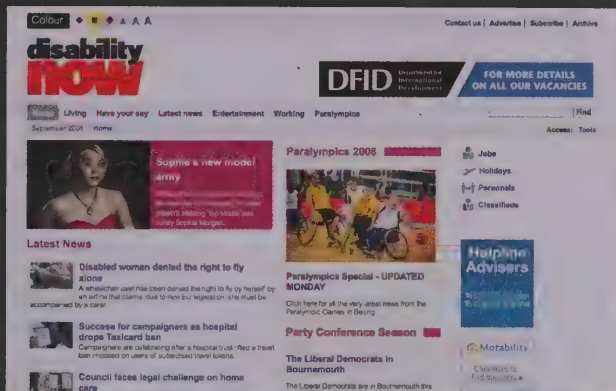
tension, grounding, autogenic therapy and mind journeys. Finally there are solutions to common problems such as "my home's too busy", "I can't stop thinking", "I can't get comfortable", "I keep falling asleep", "I'm too worried" and "I'm too busy".

On the whole I found the DVD gave too little information about actually coping with stress – and while the guidance was helpful I was already aware of much of it from my GP.

I certainly didn't find the presenter of the DVD especially helpful – in fact she occasionally made me more stressed because of the way in which she conducted the exercises, which I found a little over-dramatic and repetitive – but maybe that's just me. I'm sure that she and this DVD could help many other Deaf people.

INFORMATION

You can order the *Stress and Relaxation* DVD online at <http://www.eyegaze.tv/health> at £24.95 (free delivery). If you enter the quote **DISNOW** you will get an automatic discount



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- Mrs S. Briffett, South Wales
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Ups and downs in the motor trade



With Honda, Nissan, General Motors and Jaguar Landrover all pulling back on vehicle production while dealerships sales slow down, **Helen Smith** asks is Motability bucking the economic trend

As the recession continues to put the brakes on the economy, the outlook for the car industry remains bleak, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), which is forecasting that sales for the year overall will fall by a fifth to some 1.72m vehicles.

In comparison to this Motability, who provide cars to disabled people in exchange for their mobility allowance, recorded a record level of growth in 2008. Last year another 35,000 people joined the scheme bringing their total number of customers over the 500,000 mark. Many people are finding getting unsecured loans for car purchase is becoming almost impossible due to the credit crunch, so more eligible motorists have turned to Motability rather than buy vehicles privately. Motability is now the biggest car scheme in the



PHILIP MEACH

Many people are finding getting unsecured loans for car purchase is becoming almost impossible due to the credit crunch

world, and since the majority of customers renew their car every three years it's not hard to see how Motability sales are having a big impact on the numbers of cars sold.

So could Motability help save some car dealerships?

Network Automotive Management's MD, Colin Bruder, thinks it could certainly help. He has put together an action plan to help dealerships which includes selling into Motability to help increase their sales. He said:

"Motability represents by far the greatest opportunity for dealers not only to shift some metal, but also to put something back into the community".

It seems his advice has been taken on board as Motability has had an

increased number of inquiries from dealers about pursuing Motability customers, and questions from dealers about how to make their showrooms more appealing to disabled people. Mike Betts, Chief Executive of Motability Operations, said: "Dealers recognise that customers paying through their mobility allowance are not subject to the problems of reduced access to credit. Motability business is a significant and attractive customer base for the dealer to win".

Although customer numbers have increased this means the number of second hand cars that have to be sold on has also increased, and sales of second hand cars have slumped. Motability told me: "We are not immune from the economic climate and we have seen a significant downturn in the value of the used cars we sell". However, although the value of the cars has fallen they say they are still succeeding in finding buyers for ex-Motability vehicles.

With about two million people receiving the qualifying benefit for joining the Motability scheme there is plenty of scope to recruit even more customers. So, for car dealers fighting to make sales in the recession, selling to this market can only be a good move.



TfL

Dial-a-Ride delivery doubts

What's going wrong with London's Dial-a-ride service, asks **Paul Carter**

In London, as elsewhere in the country, Dial-a-Ride, a free door-to-door transport service for disabled, older and vulnerable people, is widely acknowledged to be a lifeline for many of its 49,000 users who are unable to access buses, trains or the Underground.

But scratch the surface and things aren't as happy as they seem. Investigations by the London Assembly (LA) have highlighted a number of worrying issues about the Dial-a-Ride operation.

Concerns began to be raised in December when the LA passed a motion "deploring the standard of service delivered to elderly and vulnerable Londoners" by Dial-a-Ride.

Investigations by the LA's

Transport Committee have since uncovered areas of concern around availability, efficiency, flexibility and punctuality.

Many of the problems appear to stem from a new centralised booking and scheduling system, which was fully introduced from September 2008. Since the change, users have reported problems, including being refused journeys they have made regularly in the past, inflexibility of bookings, and inefficiency.

One user told the committee that Dial-a-Ride wanted to send two separate minibuses 30 minutes apart for people living at the same address. Another said that it was often a case of "four people, four vans".

Valerie Shawcross, LA Member for Lambeth &

Southwark, and chair of the Assembly's Transport Committee, said that many Assembly Members had received direct complaints about the service.

The service is increasingly not meeting the demands of people

"It's not that anyone has concerns with the drivers or the quality of the service, it's more about the phone centre and the scheduling," she said.

Faryal Velmi is director of Transport for All, a group that represents the interests of accessible transport users in London. She says that Dial-a-Ride is a vital service that helps facilitate indepen-

dent living but she feels it needs "immediate action."

"The problem is that the scheduling system that was supposed to revolutionise the service hasn't performed and hasn't worked.

"For those people who can get through, and get a trip to take them where they want to go, it's a good service, but for many people it takes ages to get through, and they often have to wait around and be flexible.

"The service is increasingly not meeting the demands of people."

Following a public session with Dial-a-Ride users, Mrs Shawcross wrote a letter to the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, asking for clarification on what is being done to improve the service for disabled Londoners.

The letter, seen by *Disability Now*, requests that the Mayor instruct Transport for London (TfL) to provide a written response by June 2009.

A spokeswoman for TfL said: "We realise that there have been difficulties with the performance of Dial-a-Ride and will take the concerns our customers have onboard.

"We will be reviewing the concerns raised by the Transport Committee and will be responding to them as soon as possible and will update them on our performance."

sportnow

By Paul Carter



OLYMPIC DELIVERY AUTHORITY

Digging a level playing field

Hard hats, JCBs and giant mounds of earth are not the immediate things that spring to mind when thinking of potential employment opportunities for disabled people.

However, with building work for the Olympic Park well under way, several initiatives are already taking place aimed at getting more disabled people involved in the construction and infrastructure of the Games.

As part of the Olympic

Delivery Authority's (ODA) "diversity week", an event was held at the Plant Training Centre in the north of the Olympic Park, inviting disabled people interested in gaining work in the construction industry to have a basic training session on operating digging equipment, and also to meet other disabled people already working on the Games.

Jonathan Shaw, minister for disabled people was in attendance to present the

ODA with the disability symbol, more commonly referred to as the 'two ticks'.

He told *Disability Now* that the Olympics and Paralympics had to be seen as a leading example of good practice in the labour market.

"It has to," he said. "These opportunities don't come up very often and we've got a chance for people to enjoy spectacular sport, whether that's Olympics or Paralympics,

If we can do that there's no reason why other big infrastructure projects cannot do the same

and also to be a part of building the Games. That involves many different jobs and there are real opportunities for disabled people here. Importantly, among the companies that are taking people on, is the



OLYMPIC DELIVERY AUTHORITY



OLYMPIC DELIVERY AUTHORITY

Jonathan Shaw (centre) speaking at the Plant Training Centre

opportunity to use the untapped pool of talent that there is out there."

Tessa Jowell, minister for the Olympics, told *Disability Now* that the Paralympics had to be an "exemplar for others."

She said: "The Olympics is the biggest infrastructure project in the country, but it's only one project. I, and everybody involved, feel it should be an exemplar for

others, addressing the barriers disabled people face in entering the industry, and engaging with employers.

"If we can do that there's no reason why other big infrastructure projects cannot do the same."

She also said that the Paralympics provided "unlimited opportunities" to further the equality agenda for disabled people, and to "reshape and educate"

society's attitudes.

"We are absolutely clear that we want the Paralympic Games to be a sporting festival that is of equivalence with the summer Olympic Games. That was one of the most important lessons from the Games in China – against all expectations they succeeded in achieving that. We, along with everybody else who reflected on the impact of the Games, were impressed by the legacy and lasting impact on the attitudes towards disabled people."

Shaw said: "The more that disabled people are seen in employment and doing jobs, and the more regular and mainstream that becomes and not something that is a surprise or a bit unique – that's equality.

"If the Olympics hadn't come along we'd still have continued our work regardless. But as it's come, then absolutely we should seize the opportunity it presents us in breaking down the barriers, whether that's the physical or the attitudes. I'm very excited."

Lorraine Martins, head of equality, inclusion, employment and skills at the ODA said that a key part of London winning the bid was around diversity, and that the organisation had set an early objective of delivering "the most

accessible and the most inclusive games ever.

"We've been very explicit about what we want to achieve, and that's all in the public domain, so we don't want to fail," she said.

"I'm confident that the resources are there for us to do it, and I'm also confident that we've got the right processes and policies in place, so the next bit now is around delivery. That takes a little bit longer but I think we're well placed to do some really good things."

However, she conceded that there was still work to be done to ensure full inclusion for disabled people.

She said: "We set ourselves some benchmarks in the context of the construction industry. Our benchmark for disabled people on site is three per cent. We're currently at one per cent, but we think that is partly as much about disclosure as it is about volume.

"I think we're making progress, I genuinely do. When we speak to disabled people they're telling us that it's moving in the right direction, though I think there's space to do more.

"The Games give us a real opportunity to leave some examples of really good practice that other organisations and companies, and in particular the construction industry can take forward for the future."

artsreview

TV's *Cast Offs* no more



KATE BEATTY

As Channel 4 announces its commissioning of what it hopes might be the equivalent for disability of *Queer As Folk*, Alison Walsh talks to **Ian Macrae** about her brave new venture

There's nothing new about the moc-doc on Channel 4: who can forget Chris Morris's wonderful squirm-making exposé of spoof drug

"cake", with Noel Edmunds's outrage about as convincing as one of his own "Gotcha" stunts.

But perhaps *Cast Offs*, commissioned jointly by Alison Walsh and Camilla

Campbell, owes more to reality TV than a current affairs shocker.

"It's drama done in a mock documentary way," says Walsh, the Channel's editorial manager for disability, "telling the stories of six disabled characters who're left on an island for a long time. We follow their struggles and the relationships that build up between them and there are also flashbacks to their lives before they went to the island. So it's trying to show the reality of disabled people's lives in an entertaining way."

Whether or not that old trick can be turned remains to be seen. But certainly the writing team gives the show a handy helping of contemporary cultural cred. Jack Thorne (*Shameless*, *Skins*, *The Scouting Book for Boys*) has teamed up with *The Thick of It*'s Tony Roche. They're joined by Alex Bulmer, a blind writer who recently worked on the Radio 4 dramatisation of *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*.

Walsh says, "Jack Thorne, who has a disability himself, is a fantastic writer. He has a subtlety and fearlessness

that I've not seen anywhere else."

As for the on-screen talent, the Channel is being coy about that, preferring to talk about impairments. As its press release says, "The cast will feature a range of impairments including blindness, deafness, dwarfism and cherubism."

Walsh expands on that slightly: "It's a mix of new and more experienced talent. I was really keen we get some new people in the series."

From Walsh's standpoint, TV drama remains one of the last conquests in terms of disability.

"I think we've made a lot of progress against getting disabled people across mainstream shows, but I wanted to do something that would catapult disabled actors into the limelight."

She reacts very positively to my suggestion that this could have the same sort of impact for disabled people as *Queer As Folk* did for the gay agenda.

"It feels that ground-breaking to me and as if it should be making that amount of noise."

• *Cast Offs* is slated for transmission later in the year.

BOOK

Lady Crook-Back

The Sisters Who Would Be Queen by Leanda de Lisle (HarperPress, £20).

In the 16th century, the heir to Elizabeth I's throne was briefly Lady Mary Grey, a spirited and intelligent woman who reputedly had dwarfism.

Described unkindly by contemporaries as "the smallest person at court" and "crook-backed", she was a sister of Lady Jane

Grey, beheaded on the orders of Queen Mary, and of Katherine Grey, who died young from self-starvation.

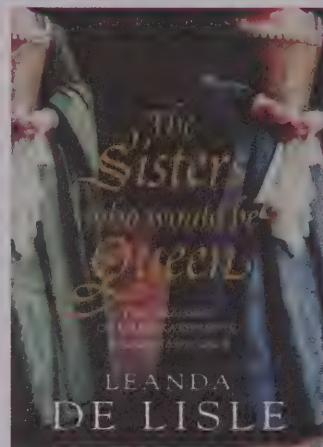
As, technically, the only surviving heir to Elizabeth I (though many saw Mary Queen of Scots' claims to be stronger), England was tantalisingly close to having its first disabled queen.

Unfortunately, Mary's life proved to be unsuccessful. Against Queen Elizabeth's wishes, she married Thomas Keyes, a widower twice her age, and was then ridiculed

because of the disparity in their heights.

Leanda de Lisle's well-researched book tells how after Keyes' death, Mary lived a comfortable life in relative obscurity but died at 33, during an outbreak of plague, putting paid to the chance that she might put disability centre stage in English politics.

Penny Batchelor



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Sussex Health Care

Sussex Health Care is an award winning group of care homes founded in 1985. The Group now operates 16 homes, predominantly in the West Sussex area, providing nearly 550 beds, incorporating specialist care provision as well as care for older people.

Sussex Health Care has recently opened 2 new purpose-built facilities:
Beechcroft Care Centre, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead

for young people with physical disabilities and learning disabilities.

Horncastle Care Centre, Plawhatch Lane, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead

for young people with acquired brain injury and neurological conditions.

Both homes provide 24-hour nursing care for approx 20 young people in superb purpose-built facilities with track hoisting throughout the homes. Each single room is provided with en suite facilities. A swimming pool and spa pool are available to all service users along with sensory and physiotherapy rooms.



For further information or to arrange a visit, please contact Corrine Wallace, Head of Operational Care Services. Tel: 01403 217338 • Fax 01403 210424
www.sussexhealthcare.org • email: corrine.wallace@sussexhealthcare.org

Sussex Health Care operates the following award winning care homes:

BEECHCROFT CARE CENTRE (Physically Disabled & Learning Difficulties) East Grinstead 01342 300499

BEECH LODGE (Physically Disabled & Learning Difficulties), Horsham 01403 791725

HORNCastle CARE CENTRE (Acquired Brain Injury and Neurological Conditions) Sharpthorne 01342 813910

KINGSMEAD LODGE (Physically Disabled & Learning Difficulties) Horsham 01403 211790

NORFOLK LODGE (Learning Difficulties) Horsham 01403 218879

ORCHARD LODGE (Physically Disabled & Learning Difficulties) Warnham 01403 242278

RAPKYNS CARE HOME (Adult Care) Horsham 01403 265096

RAPKYNS CARE CENTRE (Physically Disabled & Learning Difficulties), Horsham 01403 276756



webwatch

Bags of opportunities



For **Kate Waugh**, a lifelong love of handbags has helped her get a handle on an enterprising business venture that's also a hobby

experience of finding a handbag you love: you just know you can't go on without that bag...

I've had lots of help from family and friends, for which I'm very grateful – especially my parents, who set up the unit we run the business from. They now run it on a daily basis, as I work full-time as Disability Support Manager for Birmingham City University, which I really enjoy. In my spare time I do admin for the website and look after the content: I love the handbags so much I don't see it as work!

Business is good, despite the current economic situation. We keep our prices as low as possible and I've noticed that despite the

trends in accessories that fashion magazines tell us about, customers buy the handbags they like and that suit their lifestyle, so we have a wide range of shapes, colours and styles.

Thanks to expert advice from my PR consultant brother, I've generated lots of great publicity. Media coverage has included Radio 4 and the local press and radio. Emotional

'Emotional Baggage' comes from the experience of finding a handbag you love: you know you can't go on without that bag

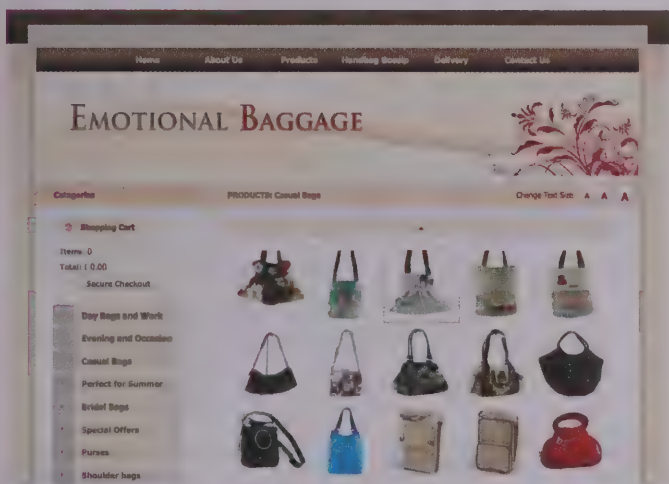
I've always loved handbags and often bored people with my plans for a handbag shop, so last year I stopped talking about it and gave it a go.

I'm sure my passion for handbags comes from being so small that I can never find that perfect pair of shoes, but I can always find a handbag I love!

Having put together my website brief and discovered web designers who "got me" and patiently put up with my picky demands, I got a lovely site that does everything I hoped for.

This includes automatically updating stock so our customers won't experience the irritation of ordering a handbag we've sold out of. Excellent customer service is very important to me.

I visited trade shows to choose stock (serious self-control required for a handbag addict), learned how to take good quality photographs (having shamelessly milked several professional photographers for tips), found a little unit to keep all the lovely bags secure in, and lo, www.emotionalbaggage.co.uk was born. The name comes from the



Baggage has a Facebook page and I also love to tweet on Twitter. I'm sad to report that I haven't yet managed to get those famous Twitterers, Wossy and Stephen Fry, to follow Emobag but I'll keep trying.

→ Have your say

- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

worklife

Building a career

Architect **David Bonnett** (pictured) didn't worry about accessible design until he became disabled himself. Now he's a leading expert on the subject

When I was young I was wonderfully oblivious to issues of access. I was much fitter and able to run around. If I fell, I bounced, and nothing much mattered. I had no expectation that the world needed to adapt to people's needs; I accepted that everyone ought to adjust to the status quo.

In the late '70s and '80s government and local authorities started to challenge the way we'd been doing things in terms of design. Simply because I happened to be an architect and became disabled right at the time that things were changing, I became the focal point for the new thinking. My local authority was looking for someone to create accessible designs and I was quickly identified as someone who could take the subject up and develop it, both as a designer and a disabled person.

I rather fell into doing this. I had a certain amount of resistance initially because I didn't want my disability to determine my career route. But I was heavily involved in housing



design and there was this glaring problem for people

who were being moved into flats with lots of stairs, or windows with high handles, and so on. It triggered me into a sense of engagement.

In the past, people put up with all sorts of inadequacy in buildings. Since then UK architecture has made huge progress. We now have policies and laws and although the changes are costly and slow and involve a lot of persuasion, I'm convinced that things are improving.

I've worked on public buildings including the Tate Modern and Kew Palace and Gardens. In fact I work on a lot of historic buildings and often you've got to be quite subtle about the changes you make. You can't make a big statement about accessibility, you simply want someone to be able to enter a building, enjoy it and then leave without destroying the qualities they've come to see.



London's South Bank: transformed by David Bonnett's firm

I'd like to be known for having a fair and balanced judgement on things. I'm not a campaigner but I get passionate about things in a positive way. I want to work on places of government: it's all very well for the Government to insist on change in the industry, for small sectors that probably can't afford it, but it needs to take the lead itself.

Right now we're working on the Athletes' Village for the 2012 Olympics, making accommodation accessible for Olympians and Paralympians. After the Olympics the area will turn into regular housing and we hope to set new standards, not only of design, but of process and expectation for the future.

• Dave Bonnett was talking to Cathy Reay

DAVID BONNETT: CAREER PATH

- 1976: Graduated in architecture at University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- 1980: Started work as local authority architect
- 1994: Research degree PhD from Oxford Brookes University on designing

- for people with disabilities
- 1994: Set up own practice, now David Bonnett Associates
- 1995 and subsequently: Participation on working parties, committees and judging panels

Time to Get Equal Week 8-14 June 2009

Time to Get Equal Week supports local campaigning on issues which matter to disabled people. The week brings people together to create change and to challenge unfairness and inequality.

Last year saw over 100 activities take place up and down the country – how will you get involved this year?



This year you can get involved, raise awareness and funds through Scope's new Time to Get Active event.

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deep red, diesel, 82k miles, P reg, CD player, new tyres, exhaust and battery installed a month ago. Wheelchair conversion with rear access through ramp. Carries 6 including wheelchair. Only 2 owners from new, full MOT and tax, in vgc, £2,000 ono. Tel: **01980 556147** (Salisbury) or mobile: **07789 414021**.

FIAT MULTIPLA 1.9, diesel, registered May 2007 (07 plate), digital grey, pas, CD player, air con, central locking, heated electric mirrors and windows. With Brotherhood Wheelchair Conversion allowing rear ramp access to front passenger position. Carries 4 including wheelchair. Ex-demonstration model and only one owner from new, 16k miles, in very good condition, £19,500. Tel: **01604 499376** (Northampton).

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EXPRESSION 1.6, 16 valve auto, 12.5k miles, sea green, with all extras incl sensors. Registered 2004 (04 plate), Wheelchair Conversion by Jim. Doran with push and pull hand controls and wheel knob for steering. Seats 5 without or 3 with wheelchair, automatic S and F Hoist with tie down. One lady owner from new, hardly been used, £7,000 ono. Tel: **01676 535774** (Solihull).

MERCEDES Vaneo 1.6 Trend 82bhp, 5-DOOR, petrol, manual, brilliant Silver. '06' reg May 2006 with Brotherhood Klaster 50 Conversion allowing 60" internal headroom, including two rear seats. 20k miles. Features are ABS Brakes, Alarm, Driver and Passenger Airbag, Electric Front Windows, Power Assisted Steering, Radio/Single CD Player, Remote Central Locking and Sliding Rear Doors. Price: £18,000.00 ono. Tel: **07779 635111** or email chet@shah2277.freeserve.co.uk

RENAULT KANGOO 1.4, auto, petrol, A reg, green, 26k miles. MOT expires Jan 2010. Rear ramp, electric winch, 5 doors, accommodates scooter or wheelchair. Pas, remote central locking. £6,000 ono. In very good order. Tel: **01626 326858** (Newton Abbot).

RENAULT TRAFIC 2.1, diesel, white, N reg (1995), 114k miles. With wheelchair conversion incl rear manual lightweight ramp. Carries 6 incl 2 rear seats and room for wheelchair. MOT expires August 09, tax until Jan '10, serviced every 5,000 miles by Renault dealer. £899 ono. Tel: **01865 724542** (Oxford) or email: donboy667@yahoo.co.uk

CHAIRMAN RENAULT

KANGOO 1.1, registered 2003 (53 plate), green, central locking. Wheelchair conversion by Gowings incl manual lightweight ramp at rear with winch belts for loading. Carries maximum of 4 people, only 17k miles and 2 owners from new, 12 months' MOT. £5,900 ono. Tel: **01580 712349** (Cranbrook, Kent) or email: brucedoble@aol.com

TOYOTA PREVIA T3 2.0, diesel, metallic blue, air con, central locking, alarm system, CD player, e/windows, pas, alloy wheels. Automotive Group Wheelchair Conversion with lowered hinged tailback, full width ramp at rear, 4 point anchorage system with inertia belts. Carries 6 including wheelchair. Full MOT for a year, only 46k miles and one owner from new, regularly serviced, in very good condition and asking only £13,500 ovno. Tel: **01628 528636** (High Wycombe, Bucks) or mobile: **07970 860786**.

VW SHARAN SE 1.9TDI, manual diesel; "S" registered; metallic red; 71 k miles; 2 owners; MOT to Sept 2009; Automotive Group conversion; driver plus 4 passenger seats plus wheelchair; rear ramp and anchorage points; FSH; central locking; electric windows front & back; electric

RECRUITMENT

What's your contribution to London's mental well-being?



Working for Wellness (WfW) is recruiting over 200 trainees with a number of PCTs in London as part of the National Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme.

The position

Trainees will work within new IAPT services, which promote access to low intensity therapies, guided self-help and computer assisted Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as well as high intensity psychological therapy.

Our offer

Trainees will receive employment, full salaries, a year of high quality training at one of our world class universities, as well as strong support and comprehensive supervision.

Two types of worker

To train as a low intensity worker requires mental health work experience and/or some lived experience of mental health issues.

To train as a high intensity worker requires a professional qualification in Mental Health, Health or Social Care.

Who should apply?

Courses are at postgraduate level and applicants are normally required to have a degree, or be able to demonstrate academic equivalence. We believe in recruiting a diverse workforce and actively seek applicants from across communities.

When?

The regional recruitment process will take place throughout spring and summer 2009 with training/employment starting in September/October.

For further information about Working for Wellness and how to apply, please contact us at wfw@ldc.org.uk

mirrors; radio/cassette; central locking; pas; air con; swivel front seats; well looked after; £2,250 ono. Tel: **01560 482618** (Ayrshire) or e-mail: jie.smith@talktalk.net

WHEELCHAIRS/SCOOTERS

LIFE STAND COMPACT electric 2005 model. In fully working order and great condition. Mainly used indoors but also for outdoor use. Seat width approx 16 to 17 inches, height 37 inches. Can be driven standing upright as well as sitting, with an adjustable back rest. Max range 13 miles and speed approx 6 mph. With fully working charger, carries up to 120 kg. Cost £9,200, asking half price at £4,600. This chair will change your life for the better, it did for me. Buyer must pay on collection. Tel Miss Mason: **01905 20206** (Worcester) or rack2k@hotmail.com

BALDER FINESSE F280, purchased in August 2005, seat width 45cm, seat depth 47.5cm, left mounted hand control, powered Tilt-in-Space and recline facility. Powered elevating seat and elevating leg rests. £6,500 for quick sale. Please tel Jackie: **01296 316307** or email: jackie.bailey@buckshosp.nhs.uk

SHOPRIDER ELECTRIC SCOOTER with joystick for steering, silver with grey upholstery, together with basket. Complete with charger, 5 mile range on full charge, variable speed for pavement use up to 3 mph. 3 years' old but hardly used. Recent thorough service, asking £450 for quick sale. Tel: **01580 712349** (Cranbrook, Kent) or email: brucedoble@aol.com

Cont'd see pg 68

COURSES



Centre for Disability Studies School of Sociology and Social Policy University of Leeds

Diploma/MAs in Disability Studies at Leeds

In response to increased demand, the *Centre for Disability Studies* at the University of Leeds now offers seven post graduate courses in Disability Studies and related fields. In addition to the hugely popular:

- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability Studies
- Post Graduate Diploma/MA in Disability Studies *by Open Distance Learning*

Also we now offer the following programmes:

- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability and Gender
- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability and Health

- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability and Race and Ethnicity
- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability and Social Policy and
- Post-graduate Diploma/MA in Disability and Special Educational Needs.

These new schemes have been developed to give students an opportunity to apply a disability studies perspective to a particular area of social policy and support. All our Disability Studies courses are designed for people working in or planning a career in the general area of disability policy, research and related activities.

Candidates will normally have a first degree or equivalent professional qualification, *but relevant experience will be taken into account where appropriate*. These courses are taught in an accessible location and the University welcomes disabled students and people working in the human service industries.

For further details please contact **DEBBIE WESTMORELAND** or **JESSICA LEWIS** in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, LS2 9JT.

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BALDER F280 ELECTRIC

wheelchair, sit or lie functions, joystick/care control. Reclines, headrest, horn, lights, charger included – 5 speed settings, max speed 6 mph. Bought in 2001, regularly serviced (last service by TPG Disabled Aids Hereford Feb 09). Hardly used, in excellent condition, cost £13,350, asking only £3,499 for quick sell. Will arrange local, mainland viewings. Tel: 01983 568800 (Isle of Wight) or email: christinejames605@btinternet.com

PRIDE JAZZY 1103 powered wheelchair with seat & footrest rise – £2,500. Tel: 01803 832412 or e-mail: sarah_davies22@hotmail.com

VIPER POWER BIKE by Team Hybrid, silver, for turning your wheelchair into a powered bike, can be fixed easily to any rigid framed wheelchair. Max speed 11 mph (for road or pavement use),

minimal extension allowing freedom and independence. With 2 batteries (one brand new), 4 hours for full charge (6–7 miles), full instruction manual, only one year use, in very good condition, asking only £600 for quick sale. Tel: 020 8440 5783 (Barnet, N. London) or email: bingham.c@sky.com

HOUSEHOLD & FAMILIES

CREAM OPERA CHAIR
(supportive office chair) £240.
Wine/rusty red Opera Chair
(supportive office chair) £24 Tel:
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sarah_davies22@hotmail.com

ADJUSTAMATIC TWIN BEDS
linked to form a queensize bed with full padded headboard. Both beds in very good condition and full electronic working order. £1,150. Can be easily disassembled for removal from bungalow in Soham, Cambs. For more pics email valaryan@aol.com, or tel: Derek Head on 01223 512169.

ENDRES RECLINING BATH seat with battery powered lower, recline and raise functions. No special installation required – lifts easily out of bath to allow other to use as normal. Hardly been used and in very good condition with spare covers. Bought at a discount in a closing down sale a couple of years ago, so now asking only £250. Tel: 0117 970 1860 (Bristol).

DN Deadline -

May published
28 April.

Classified deadlines:
Booking: 6 April.
Copy: 7 April.

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PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

External Board Members

Cross-government – Disability Equality Delivery Board

Disabled people face many barriers that prevent them from living full and independent lives. The Government is committed to improving the life chances of disabled people, and the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) acts as a champion of disabled people within Government, working with departments to improve understanding and enable the delivery of services that meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people.

We have made good progress since establishment in 2005 but there is still a lot more to do. We are now looking to recruit three external Board members to complement the skills and experience on the Disability Equality Delivery Board. We would like at least two of these to be disabled people. The Board also wishes to attract people from under-represented groups who have a track record in delivering results in challenging circumstances. You will make a valued contribution to strategy and bring external challenge to initiatives and policies proposed by departments. Together, we hope to deliver the Government commitment of ensuring equality for disabled people by 2025.

We are looking for individuals who will bring a strong understanding of the barriers faced by disabled people and, in particular, we are looking for one Board member to represent the interests of children and young people. Regardless of your background, you will bring strong communication skills to express the views of others and the ability to influence policy development across Government.

For more information on these important roles, including details on how to apply, please visit www.veredus.co.uk

For an informal and confidential discussion about these roles please call Veredus: Katie Higgins on 020 7932 4237, Rebecca Jones on 020 7932 4223 or Brenda Bignold on 0870 165 4227. Textphone: 0207 808 5256.

The closing date for applications is 10am on Tuesday 21st April 2009.

DWP is committed to providing services, which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity in our working practices with all of our customers, colleagues and partners.

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DWP Department for Work and Pensions



Office for Disability Issues

HM Government

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2001(51)	Suzuki Wagon R Liberty 1.3GL 5sp, 28,000 mls	£4,995
2003(53)	Vauxhall Agila 1.2 Liberty 5sp, 11,000 mls	£6,995
2006(56)	Suzuki Wagon R Liberty 1.3GL 5sp, 6,000 mls	£10,995

MEDIUM

wheelchair accessible, over 50 in stock including		
2001(51)	Renault Kangoo 1.4 Authentique 5sp, 38,000 mls	£3,795
2002(02)	Renault Kangoo 1.4 Authentique 5sp, 29,000 mls	£4,495
2001(51)	Renault Kangoo 1.4 Authentique auto, 24,000 mls	£4,995
2003(03)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique 5sp, 18,000 mls	£5,495
2004(54)	Fiat Doblo 1.3 JTD Active 5sp, 31,000 mls	£5,595
2005(55)	Fiat Doblo 1.3D Multijet Active 5sp, 17,000 mls	£5,795
2003(03)	Renault Kangoo 1.6 Authentique auto, 18,000 mls	£5,995
2003(53)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique 5sp, 6,000 mls	£5,995
2005(56)	Fiat Doblo 1.3D Multijet Active 5sp, 29,000 mls	£6,295
2005(56)	Fiat Doblo 1.3D Multijet Active 5sp, 9,000 mls	£6,595
2004(54)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Expression, 5sp, 28,000 mls	£6,995
2006(56)	Fiat Doblo 1.9JTD Dynamic 5sp, silver, 15,000 mls	£6,995
2005(55)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique 5sp, 4,000 mls	£7,295
2007(07)	Fiat Doblo 1.4 Dynamic 5sp, 5,000 mls	£7,395
2007(07)	Fiat Doblo 1.9 JTD Active 5sp, 38,000 mls	£7,495
2006(56)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique, 9,000 mls	£7,995
2006(06)	Renault Kangoo 1.5D Authentique, 8,000 mls	£7,995
2007(56)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique, 2,000 mls	£8,245
2007(56)	Citroen Berlingo 1.4 MultiSpace, 7,000 mls	£8,295
2008(57)	Fiat Doblo 1.4 Dynamic, 2,000 mls	£8,395
2007(07)	Peugeot Partner 1.4 Totem, 3,000 mls	£8,495
2008(57)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique, 1,000 mls	£8,995
2008(08)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique 5sp, 3,000 mls	£9,195
2007(07)	Renault Kangoo 1.6 Authentique auto, 9,000 mls	£9,295
2008(08)	Citroen Berlingo 1.4 Multi Space 5sp, 3000 mls	£9,295
2008(58)	Renault Kangoo 1.2 Authentique 5sp, 300 mls	£9,495
2008(57)	Renault Kangoo 1.5D Expression 5sp, 3,000 mls	£9,595
2008(08)	Renault Kangoo 1.6 Authentique auto, 900 mls	£9,895
2008(58)	Renault Kangoo 1.6 Open Road auto, 400 mls	£10,495
2008(58)	Peugeot Partner 1.6 HDi Escapade 5sp, 300 mls	£10,495
2008(08)	Vauxhall Combo 1.4 Tour 5sp, 2,000 mls	£11,795

FAMILY MPV

wheelchair accessible, over 30 in stock including		
2001(51)	Fiat Ulysse ELX 2.0D 5sp, 64,000 mls	£5,995
2001 (Y)	Kia Sedona SX 2.5 auto, 41,000 mls	£6,995
2004(04)	Kia Sedona CRDi, 5sp, 58,000 mls	£8,995
2003(53)	Peugeot 807 2.0 GLX, auto, 46,000 mls	£10,995
2005(05)	Kia Sedona CRDi, auto, 17,000 mls	£11,295
2004(54)	Mercedes Vaneo 1.6 Trend, auto, 47,000 mls	£11,695
2004(54)	Mercedes Vaneo 1.6 Trend auto, 32,000 mls	£11,995
2005(05)	Kia Sedona CRDi SE, auto, 31,000 mls	£11,995
2004(04)	Mercedes Vaneo 1.6 Family auto, 33,000 mls	£12,995
2002(02)	VW Sharan Brotherhood, Hi Roof, auto, 23,000 mls	£12,995
2005(55)	Volkswagen Transporter 1.9TDi, 5sp, 23,000 mls	£12,995
2007(07)	Volkswagen Caravelle, TDi SE, auto, 17,000 mls	£19,995
2007(57)	Kia Sedona, CRDi GS, Full Low Floor, 6sp, 5,000 mls	£19,995
2008(58)	Fiat Multipla Brotherhood 'Side by Side' 1,000 mls	£21,995

LARGE

wheelchair accessible, over 20 in stock including		
1997 (R)	Peugeot Expert Combi, 1.9D, 5sp, 61,000 mls	£3,995
2001 (Y)	Renault Master 2.5D 5sp, 24,000 mls	£6,995
2003(03)	Citroen Dispatch 1.9D, 5sp, 34,000 mls	£6,995
2005(55)	Fiat Ducato 2.0D 5sp, 26,000 mls	£9,995
2007(07)	Renault Master 2.5D 5sp, 14,000 mls	£14,795
2008(58)	Peugeot Expert Tepee, 1.6 HDi, 5 sp, 1,000 mls	£17,995
2009(58)	Peugeot Expert Leisure, 2.0 HDi, 6sp, 400 mls	£19,995

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2004(54)	Suzuki Life 1.3GL Drive From auto, 12,000 mls	£13,995
2004(53)	Mercedes Viano LWB 2.2 Cdi, Drive From auto, 28,000 mls	£17,995
2005(05)	Suzuki Life 1.3GL Drive From Tiller Steering, 1,000 mls	£19,995
2008(58)	Renault Trafic Solus 1.9TDi Drive From auto, new	£25,995



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backlash



A bit of armless waving

Feeling left out, **Paul Carter's** decided to set up a club we might all give our right arms to join

I was out with a friend the other day (yes, believe it or not we do have some), when we apparently passed another limbless going the other way. I say apparently because I didn't notice at the time. "Do you know that bloke?" my mate asked. "No," I replied, immediately getting defensive at the insinuation that I must clearly know every other bloke with an arm missing in western Europe. "So why did you both wave at each other then?" he said. My god he was right. I had. I did that little knowing nod and smile. What was worse was that I didn't even realise that I'd done it. I'd acknowledged a complete stranger in the street for no other reason that we both looked a bit the same; like when Mini or VW Beetle drivers flash their headlights when one comes in the opposite direction.

There are very specific rules though. You only acknowledge your own kind – there's no cross party consensus allowed in the nod and wave club, it's like disability apartheid. Wheelies only acknowledge other wheelies, people with things



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“I did that little knowing nod and smile. What was worse was that I didn't even realise that I'd done it”

missing can only nod at other appendagely challenged folk. Hey I didn't make the rule, but that's the way it works.

Us limbless aren't quite as well organised as some folk though, they're practically a

secret society.

I've always been really jealous of groups of disabled who have conventions, where they go away for a weekend under the pretence of discussing important issues when in truth it's just a glorified piss-up. I want that. I have often wondered though what on earth they possibly talk about at those things. "Hello again everyone, how are we all? Still disabled? Righto, see

you next year. To the bar!" Something like that probably.

I've decided I'm going to set up my own. The agenda at my convention would be something like this: 9am – champagne breakfast.

10am – discussion to see if anyone has yet found a way to crack eggs that doesn't involve using their face.

10.05am – break for chips.

10.45am – pass a resolution calling for corks in wine bottles to be banned.

11am – cocktails with straws. You get the picture.

To illustrate my point that the disabled club actually exists, I had a quick look on Facebook, that great social indicator, to see if there were many impairment-specific groups set up on there. Sure enough, there are chuffing thousands, all packed with people, largely whingeing about how crap things are. Rather disappointingly though, I couldn't find any sign of a 'double above-knee, left arm below-elbow, right arm above-elbow amputees of the world unite' group. What are the chances? I'm off to set one up. And get planning this summer's convention. See you there, all five of you.



Information
for disabled
people

Directgov

Advice that's
easy to find

Directgov

www.direct.gov.uk/disability

Directgov is the website to visit for the latest information and services from government. It's clearly written, useful and the information is all in one place.

There's a large section for disabled people covering:

- ➔ home and housing
- ➔ financial support
- ➔ disability rights
- ➔ employment
- ➔ health and support

Find out about equipment, adapting your home or vehicle, direct payments (arranging your own care and services), social care assessments, the Blue Badge parking scheme – including an interactive UK-wide map, travel and transport, accessible technology – and much more.

There's also information for carers and links to charities and helpful organisations supporting disabled people.



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